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Der Herr. Theobald  
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Rev. Mr. Breckinridge,  
from his affect. father,  
The Author.

# LETTERS

CONCERNING

THE CONSTITUTION AND ORDER

OF

**The Christian Ministry:**

ADDRESSED TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

**A LETTER**

ON THE

PRESENT ASPECT AND BEARING OF THE EPISCOPAL  
CONTROVERSY.

---

**BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.**

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN  
THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

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**SECOND EDITION.**

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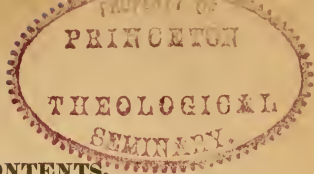
*Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit;*

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Letters concerning the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry: Addressed to the Members of the Presbyterian Churches in the City of New York. To which is prefixed, a Letter on the present Aspect and Bearing of the Episcopal Controversy. By Samuel Miller, D. D. Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey. Second Edition.

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D. CALDWELL,  
*Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.*



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TO  
**THE MEMBERS**

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

I TAKE the liberty to inscribe this volume, in its present form, to you. The original publication was addressed to those united churches in the city of *New York*, of which I was, at the time of its date, one of the pastors. And although I still cherish the memory of that relation with grateful and affectionate respect, and still continue the address which was at first adopted; yet, as the circumstances which induce me to present the work a second time to the public, are of wider extent than the demands of a few single congregations; I wish to bespeak the attention of the whole ecclesiastical body, with which I have the happiness to be connected, to the subject here discussed:—a subject which the unscriptural and exorbitant claims of a particular denomination among us have invested with an interest beyond that which intrinsically belongs to it. It is the duty of Christians in every age, not only to make themselves well acquainted with important religious truth, but also to arm themselves against surrounding errors; especially those which, from the plausibility and confidence with which they are advanced, are peculiarly fitted to “deceive the hearts of the simple.”

The following “Letters” were originally published in two separate volumes;—the *first* in the year 1807; the

*second* in 1809; the latter being an examination of the strictures of several friends of prelacy on the preceding volume. They have both been out of print for a number of years; and although frequent inquiry has been made for them, it was not supposed, until lately, that the demand was sufficient to warrant a second edition. Recent circumstances, however, have led to the belief that a new and corrected impression would be seasonable, and not unacceptable to the friends of primitive truth and order.

The original publication was made, with much reluctance, in consequence of repeated, long-continued, and violent attacks from some high-toned advocates of prelacy, chiefly of the state of *New York*, where I then resided. Of its reception by my episcopal neighbours, I will here say nothing. But I have the satisfaction to know that many others, whose good opinion I highly prize, considered the work as a service of some value to the cause of truth. It answered, in a good measure, the purpose which I intended. It satisfied and confirmed numbers, who had been either surprised or perplexed by the confidence of episcopal statements, and for whose instruction I was bound to provide. Having accomplished this design, I was quite willing that the work should pass into oblivion, with the controversy which had called it forth. And I can truly say, that one reason why I felt so little disposed, several years ago, to comply with urgent solicitations to reprint this manual, was, that I was unwilling to take any step which might prove the means of reviving or extending a dispute, which I cannot consider as either very honourable, or very profitable to the church of God.

And, as the original publication of the following Letters was prompted by unprovoked and violent attacks, and was made merely in *self-defence*; so their appearance in this new form is occasioned by a similar cause. After reposing in quietness for more than twenty years, they have been, recently, again called up to public view, and subjected to



attacks marked by great vehemence and confidence. Of these attacks, it is not deemed necessary to take any further notice than to say, that their violence and their offensive imputations have created a new demand for the work, and thus afforded an opportunity of presenting it again to the public in a more convenient form. This is the only reply that I at present intend to give to any recent assailant. And I hope that every candid reader, after attentive consideration, will be of the opinion that more was not called for.

In preparing the work for a second edition, I have revised the whole with as much care as my circumstances allowed. And, although the further reading and reflection of twenty years, have enabled me to detect some mistakes, and to reconsider and modify the statements in a few places;—yet I can truly say, that the amount of my modification has generally been, to urge my former reasonings with new confidence; to array my old authorities with additional, instead of diminished force; and, in general, to manifest what I have really felt,—a greatly augmented assurance of the soundness of my original conclusions.

With regard to my quotations from the *fathers*, and other writers, I think it proper to say, once for all, that I have endeavoured to make them with all the fidelity of which I am capable. Those who are familiar with such matters need not be reminded, that, frequently, out of a folio page, not more than half a dozen lines have any direct bearing on the purpose of the extract; and that if these are exhibited without any uncandid wresting from their connection, the real spirit of the author is set forth with sufficient accuracy. If in any instance, in the following pages, an offence has been committed against this sound principle, it has not been done *intentionally*. It is, indeed, as common as it is easy, when an adversary is incommoded by a quotation in the way of authority, to complain of it as unfaithfully made, or as disingenuously separated from its

proper connection. But of the truth of such complaints, every intelligent reader must judge for himself. I can sincerely declare, that after an attentive review of every page, I have permitted nothing to retain its place but what I verily believe may be firmly sustained; and that if I had possessed time and health to make further alterations, they would have been employed in adding what I honestly deem new evidence of the relevancy and force of every thing that I have advanced.

Nothing, my Christian friends, is further from my intention, in any thing which you will find in the following pages, than to attack the episcopal church. I have no hostility to that denomination of Christians. Those who prefer Prelacy to Presbyterianism, are cordially welcome, for me, and, I am perfectly confident, for the whole Presbyterian church, to the enjoyment of all the advantages which they see or imagine in that form of ecclesiastical government. I have not the least doubt, indeed, that prelacy is an unscriptural error; an unwarranted innovation on apostolic simplicity: but such an innovation as a man may adopt with zeal, and yet be an excellent Christian, and an heir of eternal blessedness. To all such Episcopalians as *Whitefield* and *Hervéy* in former times, and as *Newton*, *Scott*, and others of similar stamp in later periods, I can cordially “bid God speed,” and sincerely rejoice in their success. Were the world filled with such men, I, for one, should be ready to say: Let their spirit reign from the rising to the setting sun! With the utmost sincerity, then, can I declare, that no feeling of animosity toward Episcopalians, as such, has prompted me to speak in the language of the following pages. It is my unfeigned desire, and a desire which becomes stronger as I advance in life, that all who have “received like precious faith through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ,” may live together “as one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” And I can further declare that it always gives me sensible

pain to engage in any controversy, even in self defence, which tends to produce even temporary alienation among those who ought to be united by the bonds of our common hope.

But when Episcopalians belong to that part of their denomination—a very small part, as I hope and trust—who not only believe that prelacy is a divine institution, but that every other form of ecclesiastical government must be rejected as rebellion against God: when they persuade themselves, not only that the human invention which they embrace, is truth, but that nothing else can be truth; that where there is no ministry episcopally ordained, there is no church at all, no ministry, no valid ordinances, no people in covenant with God, and, of course, no warranted hope of divine mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ; when, as a native and necessary consequence of these opinions, they consider it as unlawful to indulge in any religious intercourse with non-episcopalians; and regard it as an act of fidelity to Christ to stand aloof from all who do not belong to their own body, however pious their spirit and exemplary their lives; nay, however manifestly, in all other respects, they may bear his image, and do his will; when they think it incumbent upon them to decline every act which would imply acknowledging as brethren in Christ the most devout and heavenly-minded Christians who do not stand in their particular line of fancied ecclesiastical genealogy; and to refuse all communion and co-operation with them, even in the most hallowed work of Christian benevolence; and, further, when they think it a duty to take every opportunity, in public and private, to denounce non-episcopalians as aliens from Christ, and call upon them to renounce their principles, and attach themselves to their sect, under the heaviest penalties; I say, when Episcopalians take this ground, it is difficult to tell wherein their principle differs from the corresponding principle of the papists. They evidently take a stand hos-

tile both to the letter and spirit of the Bible. They advance claims alike presumptuous, unreasonable, and mischievous. They teach doctrines which have an obvious tendency to place an outward ceremonial above the "weightier matters of the law;" and to turn away the minds of men from the vital spirit of our holy religion, to "fable and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying." In short, they contend for principles, the tendency of which is to beget narrow views, sectarian pride, and blind superstition; and to bring back the darkness and the thralldom of those ages when fallible mortals undertook to be the vicars of Christ upon earth, and to make their followers believe, that they held in their hands the spiritual rights, and the immortal hopes of their fellow men.\*

I rejoice, my respected brethren, that Presbyterians have never been chargeable with attempting to maintain opinions so unscriptural and pernicious. I rejoice that our ecclesiastical formularies, as well as our private sentiments, are, universally, alien from such unfounded claims. It gives me pleasure to know, that we have never un-churched other denominations; never denied the validity of their ordinances; never consigned them to the uncovenanted mercies of God; never stood aloof from any churches which we considered as holding the fundamental doctrines of our common salvation; but have long been in the constant habit of recognizing as brethren in Christ, and holding communion with, all denominations who manifest any practical regard to the precious truth, and the holy living, which the Bible represents as essential to the Christian character. To this state-

\* Those who desire to see the ground on which this exhibition of high church doctrine rests, are referred not only to the statements in the following letters; but also to the various episcopal publications circulating in every part of the United States, both practical and controversial, which, by either open avowal, or unavoidable inference, will fully sustain all that is here advanced.

ment, I am not aware, at present, of a single exception. I know, indeed, that we are often stigmatized as an austere and bigoted denomination. But this has never been owing to our denying the church character of any of our neighbouring sisters; but to our contending for what we deem the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and endeavouring to enforce, in our communion, that purity of life, and that abstraction from the fashionable pleasures of the world, which some other denominations do not so carefully discountenance. The truth is, Presbyterians, as such, have so little of the spirit of sect; are so ready to join with all Christian churches in carrying on any enterprize of piety and benevolence; so ready to take to their bosoms all, of every sect or name, who manifest the spirit of Christ; and so little disposed to question the standing of any ecclesiastical body, on account of its external organization, or to contend about church government at all, that they have scarcely enough of the sectarian spirit to defend themselves. It gives me unspeakable pleasure to contemplate this feature in our character as a church. It forms one among the numerous evidences that we walk in the footsteps of the primitive believers; that we have imbibed something of the spirit of Him, who, when one of his disciples said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us;" replied, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us;"—the spirit of that holy Apostle, who could say, "Some, indeed, preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

But, although Presbyterians will not yield to any other class of professing Christians whatever, in liberality to other denominations; yet when their principles are assailed, there are limits beyond which they consider silence as inconsistent with duty. When they are denounced as "aliens

from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise ;” when they are declared, as Presbyterians, to be no church of Christ, to have no ministry, no sacraments, no warranted hope in the mercy of God ; when every attempt either to dispense or receive ordinances by Presbyterian hands, is pronounced an act of rebellion against the Head of the Church ; when we are even represented as in a worse condition than the heathen, because equally out of God’s covenant, and resisting greater light than they ; surely it cannot be wrong to say a word in defence of our principles ; surely it cannot be criminal to “ give an answer to any one that asketh a reason of the “ hope that is in us, provided we do it with meekness and “ fear.” Placing out of view all regard to our own reputation, as a Church, fidelity to our Master in heaven, as well as fidelity to those who look to us for instruction, undoubtedly requires, that we show, if it be in our power, that “ we “ have not followed cunningly devised fables,” but can appeal “ to the law and the testimony” for all that we teach the people.

Allow me, then, my christian friends, before you enter on the perusal of the following Letters, to state, with brevity, in this preliminary address, a few considerations, intended to show why those high and exclusive claims which our Episcopal neighbours are in the habit of urging with a zeal and confidence worthy of a better cause, ought to be, and must be rejected. And,

I. We cannot find the least warrant for any such exclusive claims, IN THE WORD OF GOD. If Prelacy had been a divine institution, and especially, if it had been regarded by the inspired writers as the fundamental and essential matter which modern high-churchmen represent it,—could they have been silent respecting it? Can it be imagined that they would have left the subject in obscurity or doubt? When they had occasion to speak so frequently concerning the christian character and hope; concerning



the church, its nature, foundation, Head, laws, ministers and interests ; it is truly marvellous that they should be explicit on every other point than precisely *that* which *jure divino* prelatists consider as the most vital and important of all ! Yet is not this manifestly the case, the friends of the claim in question themselves being judges ? Have they not been constrained a thousand times to confess, that this claim is no where distinctly presented or maintained in the New Testament ? When the inspired writers undertake to tell us what those things are which professing Christians ought sacredly to regard, in order to make good their appropriate character, on what points do they dwell ? Do they insist on a particular line of ecclesiastical succession, or represent every thing, or, indeed, any thing, as depending on a certain form of official investiture ? Do they tell the humble inquirer after the way of holiness and salvation, that he must be careful, first of all, that he receives the sacraments from duly authorized hands ; and that, whatever he does, he must be found in communion with some bishop, who holds his office by regular descent ? Is there a syllable which has the most distant resemblance to such counsel ? Assuredly there is not. No ; the points every where insisted on, as manifesting that the character and the hopes of men are “such as becometh the gospel,” are genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, love to God and man, and habitually endeavouring to imbibe the spirit, to imitate the example, and to obey the commands of the Redeemer. The directions given are every where such as the following : “He that believeth on “the Son of God hath everlasting life, and shall not come “into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life ; “but he that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see “life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. There is, “therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in “Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the “spirit. If ye love me, keep my commandments ; for he

“that saith he loveth me, and keepeth not my commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon him. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy doth he save us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. As ye have received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, which is according to godliness, and abounding in those works of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.”

Now, I ask, is it conceivable that this could have been the tenor of the directions given by the Saviour and his inspired Apostles, to inquirers after the way of christian obedience and hope, if they had coincided in opinion with modern high-churchmen? I will venture to say, it cannot be, for a moment, supposed. Can we imagine that infinite wisdom, and infinite benevolence would undertake to instruct the members of that great community, denominated the Church, in their essential duties, and yet say nothing about that great point, without which, as some think, all her privileges would be a nullity, and all her hopes vain? Can we believe that the Bible was given for the express purpose of being “a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path,” in reference to the great interests of Christians, as individuals, and as a body; and yet that it should not contain one word of explicit instruction in regard to that which is alleged to lie at the foundation of the visible church, and to be essential to its very existence, and, of course, to the validity of all its acts? That be far from a Being who tadapts means to ends with infinite skill, and who does nothing in vain! The simple and undeniable fact, then, that he particular organ ization of the visible church; the persons invested with the ordaining power; and the uninter-



rupted succession in a line of prelates, are not so much as mentioned—or, to say the least, make no such figure, in the New Testament, as in many volumes of modern episcopal origin,—ought to be considered as decisive in this controversy. Had these principles been entertained at the time in which the New Testament was written, and regarded by the inspired writers in the same light in which they are regarded by some ecclesiastical men at the present day; they could not have been silent respecting them, without forfeiting all claim to christian benevolence, nay, to common honesty. They would have dwelt upon them in every connection; have repeated them at every turn; and have made this subject clear, whatever else was left in the dark. Now, as they, by universal confession, have NOT DONE THIS; as NO ONE of their number has done it; it is as plain as any moral demonstration can be, that the principles and claims in question were then unknown, and, consequently, have no divine warrant.

II. Another strong presumptive argument against the claim of modern high-churchmen, may be drawn from the well known fact, that almost every part of the outward ceremonial of the visible church HAS ACTUALLY BEEN CHANGED, FROM TIME TO TIME, without affecting the existence or order of the spiritual community. During the first, or patriarchial dispensation, those who ministered in holy things, received, so far as we are informed, no formal ordination at all. Yet their services were considered as valid, and were accepted of God. When the Mosaic, or ceremonial economy was introduced, the first investiture of the high priest was, by divine direction, conducted by *Moses*, who was not a high priest, nor even a common priest, himself. On all subsequent accessions of the high priest, he was inducted into office in a different manner; such an officer as *Moses* having never afterwards officiated on a similar occasion. Before the coming of Christ, the regular line of hereditary succession was repeatedly broken;

yet this was not considered as affecting the validity of the high priest's ministrations; and even the Saviour and his apostles, notwithstanding this, repeatedly acknowledged, from time to time, the existing authority of that officer. When the New Testament economy was introduced, a method of investing men with the sacred office was adopted, which had never been connected with the Aaronic priesthood. This was "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery;" for we never find an instance, in apostolic times, of an ordination performed without the presence and co-operation of a plurality of ordainers. Yet still there was diversity even here. Sometimes we find ordinations performed by apostles; sometimes, during their lifetime, by ecclesiastical men who were evidently not apostles. Similar changes and diversity of practice have taken place, from the earliest times, in reference to many other ordinances: and yet the visible church, from the family of *Adam* to the present day, has not ceased to be the same in substance. Nay, it is one of the principles of "ecclesiastical polity," in which the friends of prelacy, and especially the highest toned among them, have always agreed with the "judicious Hooker," as he is commonly styled, that the Church has power to decree, alter, and modify rites and ceremonies at pleasure. I shall not now stay to inquire whether this opinion be correct or not. It is quite sufficient for my purpose that the most zealous advocates for high toned prelacy, fully believe and maintain it: and insist that every part of the external organization of the church, may be added to, or dispensed with, at the discretion of the church herself, excepting the single feature of the transmission of ecclesiastical office and authority in the line of prelates. Now, I ask, what good reason can be given why this matter should form the only exception? If various other things, confessedly found in the New Testament, may be altered or omitted, without destroying the being, or even the well-being of the church; why should the point of prelacy be

alone unalterable; especially when we find that the mode of investing with the sacred office, has been, in fact, again and again altered, and the integrity of the church still preserved? Even supposing then, that we actually found prelaey pourtrayed in the New Testament, as a historical verity in the apostolic age, which we are very sure is not the case; still, according to the general principle of our Episcopal brethren, the church, if she thought proper, would have just as much right to alter this, as any other part of her external arrangements. Besides, let it be considered that ministers of the gospel who are not prelates, are empowered, in the Episcopal church, to preach, and administer the ordinance of baptism. Now, in this ordinance, according to the doctrine of high churchmen, the recipients of it are *regenerated*; that is, not only brought into a new relation to the church, but “born again,” by the power of the Holy Ghost. Does it require less power, then, to regenerate men, than to set an individual apart to the sacred office? Is that man who is qualified to proclaim the message of salvation, and to administer the sacraments of Christ’s house, and thus to separate between the precious and the vile, destitute of power to participate in the work of inducting into office one who shall be equal to himself, and qualified to perform the same duties? There is, surely, a wonderful inconsistency here! I am not ignorant that learned and eloquent Episcopal writers have attempted, and, as they supposed, with success, to demonstrate, that, while all the other parts of the external administration of the visible church are mutable, and may be altered at the pleasure of the church, the method of successive ordinations in the line of prelates, cannot be touched without destroying the very existence of the church. I am, however, so far from being satisfied with their reasoning, that I am more and more convinced that it leads to the grossest absurdity and error. That which God has commanded, is immutable, until he is pleased to change it; and nothing else is beyond the reach of modifi-

cation and change by the church, excepting what is thus enjoined. To take any other ground, may be very consistent for Papists ; but for Protestants, is a high-handed departure from their essential principles. Now, the highest toned prelates acknowledge, unanimously, that there is no express command in the New Testament, establishing or enjoining diocesan episcopacy. The utmost that they contend for is, that there are *facts* stated by the inspired writers which indicate that this form of church government then *existed*. Even this allegation is wholly unfounded. No such statement is made, as has been often demonstrated. But if it *were*, historic fact is not divine command. To maintain, then, that, even if prelacy could be proved to have been at that time in actual use, it *must* for ever remain in use, and can never be dispensed with, without destroying the very being of the church, is surely a doctrine which comes with a very ill grace from those who assert that every thing *else* relating to the order of the visible church, however plainly represented in scripture as existing in the apostolic age, may be changed without incurring any such penalty.

III. Another consideration is worthy of notice here. THE ORIGINAL REFORMERS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, were so far from maintaining the divine right of prelacy, that their avowed opinions, and their whole conduct evinced a different belief. In the *sixth* letter of the first series, in the following volume, some evidence in support of this position will be found ; and a greater amount of testimony might be arrayed, to almost any extent. The truth is, the first reformers of that church were substantially Presbyterians in principle, and earnestly wished to conduct the reformation of their church after the model of the reformed churches on the continent of Europe. And when they accepted a system of discipline and order much less remote from the popish system, and much less conformed to the Helvetic and other continental churches than they wished,

it was only on the plea of temporary accommodation to the prejudices of the times, and with the hope of obtaining a more apostolic and thorough reformation afterwards. This is so unequivocally testified by the laborious and impartial Episcopal historian, *Strype*, and by the candid Bishop *Burnet*, as well as other historians of undoubted reputation, that it can be doubted by no one who has taken the proper means to inform himself on the subject. With this fact accorded the whole of their treatment of the foreign reformed churches, all of whom were Presbyterian in their ordination. With those churches the original reformers of *England* maintained the most respectful and affectionate intercourse; recognized them as beloved sisters in Christ; took their ministers by the hand as validly invested with the sacred office; admitted them in various cases, without re-ordination, to preferment in their own church; and consulted them on the various measures of the day with the utmost deference. But if the English reformers had believed in the doctrine of modern high-churchmen, and had been, at the same time, honest, consistent men, could they possibly have maintained this fraternal intercourse with the foreign Protestants? I do not ask whether we can consider such a course as *probable*, but whether we can conceive it as *possible*? The firm integrity, and ardent piety of those venerable reformers have been much celebrated. Their adherence to the dictates of conscience and of God, with the courage and constancy becoming martyrs of Christ, has long been the theme of admiration and praise. But if they had taken the same views of prelacy with many of their modern eulogists, and yet acted as they did with respect to non-Episcopal Churches, we should be reduced to the necessity of branding them as men altogether regardless of principle. But they took no such views. The proof of this is complete. It was reserved for their successors, as they departed from the apostolic spirit of the reformers, to fall

into opinions, and prefer claims, as thoroughly popish in their character, as they are pernicious in their consequences.

The foregoing statement, moreover, is fully confirmed by the principles and reasonings which the immediate successors of the original reformers advanced, when they began to contend for the several parts of the system which they thought proper to establish. It is well known that in the early part of the reign of queen *Elizabeth*, when the Puritans plead for still further reformation, and when the leading points of difference between them, and the court reformers, were disclosed, the following *fundamental principles* were avowed by the two parties respectively.

In the *first* place, it was agreed on all sides, that the Holy Scriptures were a perfect rule of *faith*; but the bishops and court reformers did not allow them to be a standard of *discipline* or *church government*; affirming that our Saviour and his apostles left it to the discretion of the civil magistrate, in those places in which Christianity should obtain, to accommodate the government of the church to the polity of the state. But the Puritans contended that the Holy Scriptures ought to be regarded as a standard of *government* and *discipline* as well as of *doctrine*; at least that nothing should be imposed as necessary but what was expressly contained in them, or deduced from them by necessary consequence.

In the *second* place, the court reformers maintained, that the practice of the church for the *first four centuries*, was a proper standard of church government and discipline; and in some respects *a better standard than that of the apostles*, which, according to them, was only accommodated to the infant state of the church, while it was under persecution; whereas the model of the *third*, and especially the *fourth* century, was better adapted, as they thought, to the grandeur of a national establishment. On the other hand, the Puritans were for keeping close to the Scriptures in all the main principles of church government, and for



admitting no church officers or ordinances but such as are evidently found in scripture. They maintained that the form of government ordained by the apostles was according to the model of the Jewish Synagogue, and was designed as a pattern for the church in after ages, not to be departed from in any of its main principles. And, therefore, they rejected all the customs of the Papacy, and the practice of the first three or four centuries, excepting so far as they corresponded with the scriptures.

In the *third* place, the court reformers maintained, that the church of *Rome* was a true church, though corrupt as to some points of doctrine and government; that all her ministrations were valid; and that the Pope was a true bishop of *Rome*, though not of the universal church. They thought it necessary to maintain this, for the support of the authority of their bishops; who could not otherwise make out a line of succession from the apostles. But the Puritans affirmed, that the Pope was antichrist; that the church of *Rome* was not a true church; and that all her ministrations were superstitious and idolatrous. They, therefore, renounced her communion, and utterly declined founding the validity of their ordinations and ordinances upon any such uninterrupted line, through them, as their opponents considered as indispensable.

*Finally*, the court reformers maintained, that things indifferent in their own nature, which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the scriptures, such as rites, ceremonies, &c., might be settled, determined, and made necessary by the command of the civil magistrate; and that, when thus commanded, it was the indispensable duty of all good subjects to observe them. On the other hand, the Puritans contended, that those things which Christ had left *indifferent*, ought not to be made *necessary* by any human laws; but that it is the privilege of Christians to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free; and, further, that such rites and ceremonies as had been abused to

idolatry, and manifestly tended to lead men back to popery and superstition, were no longer indifferent, but were to be rejected as unlawful.\*

No discerning mind can possibly mistake either the scope of the foregoing principles, or the plain inferences which they warrant. It is manifest that the court reformers did not venture, did not even pretend, to make their primary appeal to scripture, in support of the form of church government, which they ultimately adopted; nay, that they thought the state of the church in the *fourth century*, when supported by the imperial government, a more suitable model for a church established by law, than its state in the apostolic age, and as exhibited in the New Testament. In other words, they virtually conceded, that the plan of church government which they thought proper to adopt, was not founded in the word of God, but in human prudence and the will of the civil magistrate. Conscious that they were governed in the course which they pursued more by the dictation of the Queen, than by the laws of Christ, they openly maintained the principle, that it was not necessary, or even proper, to take the scriptures as their guide in the government of the church. This was, evidently, placing the whole matter on a footing which would warrant Presbyterianism or Independency, just as well as Prelacy, if either should happen to be preferred by the monarch. It is hoped that, none who have the least respect for the memory of those venerable men, who adorned the early history of the Protestant church of *England*, and several of whom laid down their lives in maintaining what they deemed the truth, will ever think again of pleading their authority in favour of principles so earnestly contended for by modern high churchmen. They were either dishonest, time-serving men, or they were strangers to doctrines so entirely at war with their whole conduct.

\* NEAL'S *History of the Puritans*, Vol. I. p. 96, 97. 4to. edition.



Those who are acquainted with their history, will not hesitate a moment in adopting the latter alternative.

IV. But further; the principles and conduct of the leading divines of the Church of *England*, WHO IMMEDIATELY SUCCEEDED THE ORIGINAL REFORMERS, will prove, on examination, equally instructive and decisive. A particular discussion of this point will be found in more than one of the following letters. But some further testimony on the same subject is at hand, and worthy of the most grave consideration.

When such divines as Bishop *Hall*, Archbishop *Usher*, &c., men of colossal weight and strength, as pillars, in their day, of the church to which they belonged, could declare, as the latter at least *did*, that he could, with all readiness and affection, receive the sacraments from the hands of Presbyterian ministers; and, of course, considered their ministrations as entirely valid; and when the former could consent to sit for several months as a member of the Presbyterian synod of *Dort*, and commune with that body in prayer, preaching, and the holy Eucharist; it is perfectly impossible that they should have maintained the opinion concerning Prelacy, which it is the object of this volume to oppose. But on this point I shall not dwell. It is well known that in the day of the great and good men whose names have been just mentioned, their monarch, *Charles I.*, was involved in conflicts with the parliament which, in a few years afterwards terminated in his decapitation. In the course of these conflicts the king was urged to consent to a proposed act of the parliament for abolishing Episcopacy. This he utterly refused, alleging among other things, that Episcopacy was more friendly to monarchy than Presbytery was, and pleading "conscience," against a consent to the proposed measure. Writing on this subject to his devoted Episcopal friends and counsellors, Lord *Jermyn*, Lord *Culpepper*, and Mr. *Ashburnham*, he expresses himself thus:—

“ Show me any precedent wherever presbyterial govern-  
 “ ment and regal was together, without perpetual rebel-  
 “ lions ; which was the cause that necessitated the king,  
 “ my father, to change that government in *Scotland*. And  
 “ even in *France*, where they are but upon tolerance,  
 “ (which in likelihood should cause moderation) did they  
 “ ever sit still so long as they had power to rebel? And it  
 “ cannot be otherwise, for the ground of their doctrine is  
 “ anti-monarchical. Indeed to prove that clearly, would  
 “ require more time, and a better pen than I have. I will  
 “ say, without hyperbole, that there was not a wiser man  
 “ since Solomon, than he who said—no bishop, no king.”  
 To this the enlightened and cordial friends of the monarch,  
 and of the Church of *England* just named, made the fol-  
 lowing reply. “ If by *conscience* your meaning is, that  
 “ you are obliged to do all that is in your power to support  
 “ and maintain that function of bishops, as that which is  
 “ the most ancient, reverend, and pious government of the  
 “ church—we fully and heartily concur with you therein.  
 “ But if by conscience is intended to assert, that episcopacy  
 “ is *jure divino* exclusive, whereby no Protestant (or ra-  
 “ ther Christian) church, can be acknowledged for such  
 “ without a bishop, we must therein crave leave *wholly to*  
 “ *differ*. And if we be in error, we are in good company ;  
 “ there NOT BEING (as we have cause to believe) SIX PER-  
 “ SONS OF THE PROTESTANT RELIGION OF THE OTHER OPIN-  
 “ ION. Thus much we can add, that, at the treaty of *Ux-*  
 “ *bridge*, NONE OF YOUR DIVINES THEN PRESENT, (though  
 “ much provoked thereunto) WOULD MAINTAIN THAT (we  
 “ MIGHT SAY UNCHARITABLE) OPINION ; no, not privately  
 “ among your commissioners.”

The men who wrote thus, were intelligent, well in-  
 formed men, true sons of the church, and intimately con-  
 versant with the leading ecclesiastics as well as civilians,

\* CLARENDON'S *State Papers*, Vol. II. p 260. 274. 202.

in the kingdom. And yet they could say, with confidence, that they did not believe there were "SIX PERSONS of the protestant religion" who entertained the exclusive opinion which they reprobate.

The truth is, as long as doctrinal orthodoxy, and piety had a general prevalence in the Church of *England*, which, it is well known, was the case prior to the administration of Archbishop *Laud*, the high-church claims which I am opposing, had very few advocates among the truly learned and respectable divines of that church. It was only when evangelical truth and spirituality greatly declined, that claims so much at war with reason, with scripture, and with the communion of saints, began to be popular. And I have no doubt that it may be maintained, as a general position, that, from that time to the present, the doctrine in question has found most favour with the worldly and heterodox part of the English establishment; and been most disbelieved and opposed by the truly evangelical and exemplary portion both of the clergy and people.

V. Again; the advocates of the high church and exclusive doctrine which is here opposed, will appear, when their case is examined, liable to the charge of EXTREME PRESUMPTUOUSNESS. When we see a *very small sect*, in a great religious community, turning away, like the Pharisees of old, from all contact with the rest of their brethren; alleging that their little body alone is in the right way, and that all the rest of mankind are outcasts and reprobates;—we, instinctively, recoil from such a claim as arrogant and presumptuous in a high degree; and demand that the evidence in its support be uncommonly clear and unquestionable. It is very possible, indeed, that a small minority may be right, nay, the only body in the world that *is* right. This was actually the case with the "little flock" which the Saviour gathered in the days of his flesh, and who were "every where spoken against." But then that "little flock" was armed with a power and an evidence which

ought to have convinced the whole world. But when every thing of this kind is wanting :—when without evidence, nay, in spite of the strongest evidence to the contrary, a small body, with the narrowest prejudices, and the most determined exclusiveness, sets up a claim which not only virtually, but formally and necessarily places all the immense majority who differ from it, in the situation of aliens from all the gracious promises of heaven ;—every impartial judge will pronounce such a body liable to a charge of presumptuousness as offensive as it is groundless.

When the reformation from popery took place, it became a question with all the reformed churches, throughout Europe, what form of government they would adopt ? It would have been just as easy for them to adopt the prelatical as any other ; nay easier. It was *that* to which they had been all accustomed for a number of centuries. And there was no difficulty in the way of their prelates, if they had chosen to have them, obtaining a regular canonical investiture. There was a sufficient number of bishops who came over from the Romish church to the Protestant, to have peopled the whole ecclesiastical world with their order, if it had been deemed desirable. What, then, was the fact ? Why that all the reformers on the continent of Europe, without one solitary exception, declared in favour of the doctrine of ministerial parity, as the truly primitive and apostolic doctrine ; acknowledged prelacy to be a human invention ; universally sanctioned the principle of Presbyterian ordination ; and when any of them gave to certain ministers a kind of superintending power, uniformly declared, that they did not consider it as founded at all in scripture, but as a mere matter of human prudence, adapted to the secular circumstances in which particular communities were placed. To this statement in reference to the reformers on the continent of Europe, I cannot recollect a single exception. Now, I ask, could men have been possibly placed in circumstances more favourable to an in

telligent and impartial decision of this question? For, in the first place, they were learned men; a number of them transcendently so. Then the great body of them were fervently pious, devoted men, who gave abundant evidence that they searched the scriptures diligently, and were incapable of departing from their conscientious convictions of truth and duty. Men who evinced so much of the spirit of martyrs, cannot be suspected of compromising what they honestly believed to be the will of God in this concern. Again, they were placed in circumstances which left them perfectly unshackled in their decision of this matter. The civil rulers, every where, so far as I have been able to learn, left them at perfect liberty to adopt that form of ecclesiastical government which they judged to be most for edification. Yet, in these circumstances, they all —ALL— Lutherans and Reformed, came to the same conclusion. I repeat it—these learned, godly, devoted men—whether in *Germany* or *France*, whether in *Holland* or *Switzerland*, whether in *Sweden* *Denmark* or *Scotland*,—without any particular concert, and while they differed widely on some other points—in reference to this came to the same conclusion;—all agreed that the primitive, apostolic plan was that of ministerial parity; that Presbyterian ordination was not only just as valid as any other, but most conformed to the scriptural model; and that wherever this model was in any degree departed from, the variation was, of course, to be referred merely to human prudence, which a majority of them supposed might lawfully be exercised in modifying and arranging matters of church government. Now these are, verily, most marvellous facts, if, as modern high-churchmen tell us, the evidence in favour of prelacy, from scripture and early antiquity, is clear, undoubted, and such as all honest, impartial inquirers cannot but see and acknowledge. Were all the great and good men who conducted the reformation on the European continent so smitten with blindness, or so perverted by prejudice, as not to be able to perceive that which some

would persuade us is as clear to every sober inquirer as the light of day ; or, seeing it, were they so unprincipled as to set conscience and divine authority all at defiance ?

While this universal and most wonderful concurrence of opinion in favour of ministerial parity, as taught in scripture, pervaded the reformed churches on the continent of *Europe*, without a single exception, and also in *North Britain ; England* stood ALONE in adopting a different plan of ecclesiastical government ; and the *reasons* of her adopting this plan are too manifest to be mistaken by the most superficial inquirer. In that country the movements in favour of the reformation were begun by the monarch ; not, as all the world knows, from any love to truth or piety, but under the impulse of his pride and voluptuousness. Having, from these unworthy motives, broken off from the papal see, and made himself pope in his own dominions, instead of the Roman Pontiff, he ordered every thing, in the church as well as the state, with despotic sway, and received no more of the principles of the enlightened and holy men on the continent than suited his own blind and unworthy policy. When *Henry VIII.* died, which was not until the year after *Luther* had finished his work in *Germany*, and gone to his blessed reward ; *England* might still be said to be a popish country ; Protestant, indeed, in name ; but really and effectually disburdened of no important part of that mass of superstition in doctrine and order which had so long depressed and corrupted Christendom. Some progress in the hallowed work of reformation was made in the next reign ; but by reason of the minority and feebleness of the amiable king, every thing was in the hands of the bishops and nobles, who would naturally be disposed to retain that form of ecclesiastical government to which they had been accustomed, and especially which they were tempted to prefer as involving the continuance of their own honours. The reformation could not really be said to be established in *England* until



*Elizabeth*, who began to reign in 1558, had been some time on the throne. This Queen, haughty, despotic, superstitious, and passionately fond of show and parade in ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs, was so far from being disposed to carry the reformation further than it had been carried in the reign of her brother *Edward*, that almost every movement was rather the other way. The bishops and court clergy were naturally inclined, as might have been expected to retain prelacy, in other words, their own pre-eminence : but even if they had been otherwise minded, the Queen would have controlled their inclination ; as she manifested a strong desire for a splendid hierarchy, and restored several of the superstitions of popery which had been set aside in the reign of *Edward*. Can any one be surprised that in these circumstances, prelacy was retained in the Church of *England* ? To suppose that a set of prelates would be likely, of their own accord, to prefer a plan destructive of their own powers and emoluments, is, of all suppositions, one of the most improbable. But they could not have carried into execution such a plan, even if they had been disposed. And yet high-churchmen gravely tell us, that the circumstance of the reformation in *England*, from its rise to its consummation, being in the hands of the bishops, affords the strongest presumptive proof of its being conducted on sounder principles than on the continent, where none of the leading reformers were prelates. This is, surely, one of the most extraordinary positions ever attempted to be maintained ! The presumption is, manifestly, all the other way. The principal reformers on the continent, were more deeply learned than those in *England*. That they were *at least* as pious, and as heroically firm in acting agreeably to their conscientious convictions, no impartial judge will hesitate to admit. The fathers of reform on the continent, in rejecting episcopacy, resisted the strongest temptations of worldly ambition, for they might have had it if they pleased ; and if they had chosen

to restore it, can any one of them have doubted, or can any thinking mind now doubt, that all eyes would have been turned to themselves as candidates for the prelacy? whereas the fathers of the Protestant Church of *England*, in retaining the prelatical feature of their government, yielded to the plainest dictates of selfishness. The course they took was in support of their own authority and honours. The continental reformers were at full liberty to follow their own judgment in this matter. But those of *England*, at every step, were restrained, if not coerced, by the hand of despotic power in the state. And, finally, we have conclusive evidence, as I have shown elsewhere, that even the English reformers, while they thought best to establish prelacy in the church over which they presided, by no means considered it as resting on the footing of divine right, but regarded it as a matter of human expediency alone. Now, when the facts were notoriously as has been stated; when *England*, among all the protestant churches stood absolutely *alone* in retaining the prelatical system; and when even *she* regarded it, in the beginning, not as an apostolic institution, but as an ancient, venerable, and convenient human one, and cheerfully acknowledged as brethren those who rejected it; the high-church doctrine now so confidently maintained by some, having never been thought of by one of their number; I say, when these are unquestionable facts, on which side does the presumption lie? Surely if human authority is of any value in this matter: if the talents, learning and piety of those who were instrumental in founding the several reformed churches, are to have any weight in our present inquiry, the presumption is extreme in favour of the side of ministerial parity; and those who conclude that this side must be wrong, when only a single nation adopted the opposite: and even *that* nation disclaimed adopting it on the principle of divine right—must be considered as chargeable with a presumptuousness which it is difficult to estimate.



VI. The high-church doctrine is, further, in the opinion of some of the wisest and best men in our land, as **IRRATIONAL** as it is, presumptuous. That is, it so palpably contradicts some of the most obvious dictates of reason, and some of the most settled principles of our common Christianity, that we run no risk in saying, on this ground alone, it cannot possibly be true.

The man who can really believe that there is some wonderful influence flowing from the hands of a diocesan bishop, which can be imparted by those of no other ecclesiastie; that those who are fully authorized to preach the gospel, and administer the sacraments appointed by Christ, have yet no power to admit others to equal authority with themselves; that there is a mystical and indelible character impressed by a prelate's touch; that the validity of all official ministrations in the church of God depends on an "uninterrupted succession" of canonical ordinations, following in a regular line from the apostles to the present day; and that of course, the validity of all gospel ordinances, and the warrant of all hopes in the covenanted mercy of God, are suspended on a point of ecclesiastical genealogy, which no man living can ascertain, and which not one professing Christian in ten thousand is competent to examine; I say, the man who can really believe all this, and, consequently, rest every Christian's comfort and peace,—not where the Bible has placed them,—but on the disputable and varying formalities of fallible men; such a man, it appears to me, is prepared to swallow any absurdity. He has put his understanding under lock and key. To say, that he departs from the whole tenor of Christian character and confidence, as laid down in the Bible, is to express but part of the truth. He turns his back on reason, as manifestly as he does on the spirit of holy scripture. He is in a fit state of mind to receive and digest any notion, however preposterous, that superstition or sinister design may propose to his acceptance.

VII. The high-church doctrine which it is the design of the following pages to oppose, cannot fail of being discredited, in the view of all serious and impartial inquirers, by the UNHALLOWED CONNECTIONS in which it is commonly found. By this is meant, that the greater part of those who hold this exclusive and unscriptural doctrine, are found to associate with it, as parts of the same system, a variety of principles of the most delusive and mischievous kind. It is not asserted, that the principles to which I allude are always found in connection with the doctrine under consideration ; but that this is *generally the case*, and that there is, beyond all question, a *natural alliance* between them.

The principles referred to are such as these :—that *baptism is regeneration* :—that the ordinances of the gospel, when administered by the proper hands, have a kind of *opus operatum*, as it has been technically called, or necessary and immediate influence, depending upon the administrator being in the regular succession from the apostles :—that the church, as such, is the only authorized interpreter of the Bible :—that there can be no acceptable or valid intercourse between heaven and earth, but through the medium of a canonical priesthood :—that the sacraments are necessary to salvation :—and that the external exhibition of them is a guaranty of saving grace to all who receive them. Such doctrines as these are naturally, I had almost said necessarily, connected with the high-toned notions of prelacy, which some modern Episcopalians entertain. For if ecclesiastics of a particular description are the only authorized negotiators between God and man ; and if none, however devout and exemplary, can have any access to the mercy seat, but through their official agency ; and if all who enjoy this agency with outward regularity, are of course safe ;—then I scruple not to aver that all the principles which I have mentioned follow of course. No wonder, therefore, that they are commonly found, in a greater

or less degree, in union with the offensive claim in question. These principles, however, ought, with all sober minds, utterly to discredit the doctrine from which they naturally flow. Corruption and delusion are stamped upon them with a distinctness not to be mistaken. They are grossly superstitious. They tend to put rites and forms, in place of the Saviour as the ground of hope. They are, of course, adapted to deceive and destroy. Their reception is a revival of the claims of "the man of sin, the son of perdition," who professes to be the only authorized vicar of Christ upon earth. Their tendency, so far as they prevail, is to bring back the darkness and the thralldom of those ages, when haughty ecclesiastics undertook to be sovereign dispensers of the grace of God, and to make men believe, that they held in their hands all the spiritual privileges, and all the eternal hopes of their fellow men !

Can there be any thing presumptuous, my Christian brethren, in deciding that a claim which bears such relations, and leads to such unhallowed results, cannot be a scriptural one? No ; if our Saviour's test be safe and infallible ; if we are to know principles as well as men "by their fruits ;" then we may confidently pronounce, that the claim in question is destitute of all divine warrant, and of every character which ought to recommend it to sober minded Christians, who wish to be able to "give a reason" for that which they believe.

VIII. The claim under consideration, will further appear altogether inadmissible, if we consider its manifest and offensive UNCHARITABLENESS. It not only virtually, but formally and avowedly shuts out from the visible church, and from all the "covenanted mercies of God," the whole protestant world, excepting the members of the Episcopal church. I know, indeed, that a very different impression is often attempted to be made by the ardent advocates of this claim. They have sometimes represented as if they were pleading the cause of *almost every church on earth*.

But nothing can be more delusive, or more entirely at war with notorious facts. The truth is, when we come to scrutinize with care the real operation of this claim, it is to exclude from the visible church of Christ, and from all the promises of divine mercy,—the whole *Lutheran* denomination, in every part of the world ;—all the *reformed* churches in *Germany, France, Holland, Switzerland, and Scotland*, without exception ;—perhaps nearly one half the population of *England* itself ; and probably nineteen twentieths of the whole population of the *United States* ; including not only all classes of *Presbyterians*, but also the *Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist* churches, with many other less numerous portions of professing protestant Christians, in every part of the European and American world :—all these when traced to their original organization, and their subsequent practice, have no other than Presbyterian ordination ; and of course, all of them the high-toned prelatists unequivocally denounce ; not merely as *defective* in their views and organization ; not merely as labouring under serious *error* of doctrine or order ; (such a charge might be consistent with the purest charity :) but as absolutely ALIENS FROM THE CHURCH OF GOD and from all his covenanted mercies ;—nay, as was before remarked, in a situation worse than the heathen, inasmuch as the heathen, having no light, cannot be said to have resisted it ; but non-Episcopalians, in a Christian land are more guilty, enjoying the means of information, and, of course, being altogether without excuse. Such then, is the real state of this wonderful case. We have a comparatively small body of professing Christians ; not, certainly, a *tenth part* of the population of protestant christendom, undertaking to exclude from all the warranted hopes of the gospel, ALL THE REST OF THEIR FELLOW PROTESTANTS ;—declaring them out of covenant with Christ ; and, however eminent their piety, or fervent their zeal, or abundant their services in the cause of the Redeemer, yet, notwithstanding

all, aliens from his family, and having no divine promises of which they have a right to lay hold.\* In short, we have here the extraordinary spectacle of a body of professing Christians, virtually avowing, that no piety, however elevated, no obedience, however pure, without communion with prelates, can avail any thing in reference to Christian character:—that they are all nothing—literally nothing, so far as a gracious relation to God, and hopes in his precious promises are concerned, unless connected with a point of external order, of which the Bible does not give the smallest intimation, and a reliance on which is contrary to the whole genius of the gospel!

It may be safely affirmed, that there is no parallel to this in the whole religious world, EXCEPTING IN THE PAPACY. It is true, there are portions of the protestant church, both in and out of our own country, which are each in the habit of laying *much stress* on their respective peculiarities, representing them as highly important, and holding them fast with great, and sometimes, no doubt, with excessive tenacity. But they all, with one accord, grant that there may be genuine, acceptable piety, out of their own pale; and they all, with equal unanimity, acknowledge, that wherever sincere faith in Christ, cordial repentance, and holiness of life exist, the happy subjects of them will be accepted of God, and made for ever happy with him, just as certainly as if they belonged to their own denomination:—nay, that this will assuredly be the case, even when these truly pious individuals were never connected with any visible church in their lives. To this statement I know only of one exception in the whole protestant world, and that is formed by the exclusive prelatists of whom I am speaking. This comparatively small body feel no hesitation in consigning to “uncovenanted mercy” nine-tenths of all protestant Christendom; stigmatizing them as schismatics, rebels, presumptuous usurpers of that to which they have no right; aliens from the

commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise." But can there be the least countenance found in the Bible for this uncharitable proscription? Can it be that all the blessed reformers on the continent of Europe, who laboured and suffered more for the cause of truth and piety than any others in their day; and all the precious ministers and private christians who have flourished from that day to the present, in the churches founded by them; ALL deserved to be considered in this light;—ALL to be regarded as aliens from that Saviour to whom they consecrated all they had, and in whose service they lived and died indefatigably labouring? No, it cannot be. It is a sentence as unreasonable as it is dreadful. No such sentence was ever thought of by the *Cranmers*, the *Hoopers*, the *Ridleys*, the *Jewels*, and the *Grindals* of former times; nor can it be now pronounced without an offence, as odious as it is criminal, "against the generation of the righteous."

✓ IX. The doctrine of the exclusive prelatists is, beyond all doubt, UNFRIENDLY TO CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY. There is, probably, no principle more familiar to the intelligent Christian who has formed his sentiments from the Bible, than that the genuine religion of Jesus Christ has ever been, and ever must be, essentially favourable to all our choicest rights, as men and as Christians. It represents all men as standing, by nature, on a level before God, having equal privileges and equal responsibilities. It forbids men to put their consciences or their hopes in the keeping of others, but imposes upon every man the duty of inquiring, judging, believing, and obeying for himself. It secures to every one the right of private judgment, and represents the exercise of this right as essential to the proper intercourse between God and the soul. It teaches the Christian, that the opinions of his fellow-men are no law to him; but that "to his own Master he standeth or falleth." In short, it turns away the minds of men from the



dictation, and unwarranted claims of both civil and ecclesiastical oppressors ; and calls upon them to acknowledge the sovereignty of truth alone, and to regard the Bible as the only statute book of Christ's kingdom,—the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Now, to all these principles, it is manifest that the spirit of the exclusive prelatists is decidedly unfriendly. I am far from affirming, indeed, that a man may not cordially prefer the Episcopal form of church government, and yet receive and love all these principles. Many may, and doubtless do, possess this decided preference, who are yet warm friends of both civil and religious liberty. I do not even affirm that every high churchman is, in reality, unfriendly to religious freedom ; and far less, that he avows to himself this unfriendliness. But my position is, that the doctrine of the exclusive and thorough-going prelatists, when traced to its legitimate, and, indeed, unavoidable consequences, naturally leads the minds of men, in proportion to the degree in which it is received, to all those impressions and habits which are connected with mental servitude. This doctrine introduces human mediators as essential to intercourse between Christ and the soul. It attaches indispensable importance to the agency and authority of “privileged orders” in the church. It represents a mere man as a vicar of Christ, as a keeper of the human conscience, and as the only channel of grace. According to this doctrine, there is no access to God, but through a certain “order of priesthood ;” this order hold in their hands all the means of approach to heaven ; and their’s is the prerogative to impart or withhold the “covenanted mercies” of God. When such a doctrine is once admitted, there are no bounds to the power which it involves, or the unhallowed dominion over the conscience to which it naturally leads. It is the fundamental principle on which the whole superstructure of Papal tyranny has always rested. Hence the claim of that corrupt body to be the only authorized inter-



preter of the Scripture ; to prohibit its perusal ; to dispense pardons and immunities at pleasure ; to add to the rites and ceremonies enjoined in Scripture ; and enforce their observance to any extent which she may think proper. In a word, to this doctrine, traced out, I will not say, to its *legitimate*, but certainly to its *natural* consequences, we may refer the haughty triumph in past ages, of the ecclesiastical over the civil power ;—the bulls and interdicts which have carried not only terror, but the most formidable privations to rulers, and even kingdoms ; and all that array of ghostly penalties and coercions, of which the history of the world gives so many mournful examples. The truth is, the moment we quit the gospel plan of approaching God, and obtaining acceptance with him ; the moment we assign to the agency of man in intercourse with heaven, that paramount and indispensable character which the Bible nowhere warrants ; that moment we encroach on the great principles of religious liberty ; we commence an invasion of Jehovah's prerogative, of which no one can estimate the mischief, or see the end.

But it will, perhaps, be asked, do no other classes of professing Christians, besides exclusive prelatists, contend for the importance of the Christian ministry, and represent its agency as necessary to the regular course of ecclesiastical administration ? Certainly they do. It will be seen in the following pages, that Presbyterians, and most other non-episcopal denominations maintain decisively that the gospel ministry is an ordinance of God ; that its functions ought not to be usurped by those who have not been regularly called to them ; and that it is the ordinary means of imparting saving knowledge to the minds of men, and building them up in faith and holiness unto salvation. As such, they bless God for the ministerial office ; they highly value it ; and consider it as the duty of all men to avail themselves of its faithful services, as they may have opportunity. But further they do not go. Precious as the Christian ministry

is in their view, and inestimable as are the offices which it dispenses, they do not consider either as *necessary to salvation*. They credit the divine declaration which proclaims, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth on the son of God hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." And, accordingly, they are persuaded and teach, that wherever there is one who has genuine faith in the Redeemer, and, consequently, a vital union of spirit with him, such an individual is as completely in a state of acceptance with God, though he should never see a church officer in his life, and as sure of covenanted mercy, as if he enjoyed the most unquestionable ordinances, dispensed by the most regular minister on earth. Now those who adopt this great gospel principle, and act upon it, cannot be subjected to the reign of spiritual domination. They own no master but Christ; no mediator but Him who "came to seek and to save that which was lost;" no infallible statute book but the Bible; no real dispenser of grace but that "holy Spirit of promise" who alone can give efficacy to means by whomsoever administered, and who can find his way to the heart without means. The Presbyterian, and those who think with him, take no view of the ministerial character which necessarily gives it any official power over the consciences or the hopes of men. No certificate or intercession of a "priest" is needed to obtain access to the mercy seat. There is a wide, I had almost said, an infinite difference between all this, and maintaining that the agency of an "authorized priest" is necessary to salvation; and that, as he may, at any time, withhold this agency at his pleasure, so an obnoxious individual from whom he chooses to withhold it, may be unavoidably lost, however pure and elevated his personal piety; nay, that a nation may incur this dreadful penalty in the gross, if unfortunately laid under the bar of an ecclesiastical interdict, such as spiritual tyranny

has often imposed. In short, upon the high church principle, carried out to its legitimate consequences, "the need of the priest as an intercessor is incessant, and dependence upon him absolute and extreme."

X. The exclusive claims of prelacy are further refuted by the VOICE OF HISTORY. That is, the *practical influence* of this system, as recorded in the annals of the church, has never justified or sustained the pre-eminence to which it lays claim.

It is always an arduous task, and to delicate and benevolent minds, a painful one, to compare with each other different denominations of Christians, and to attempt to award the comparative claims of each to purity and spirituality. It is a task in which sectarian feeling is so apt to interpose, and sectarian prejudice to blind the judgment, that few minds, animated by a proper spirit, will engage in it, unless compelled; yet it is sometimes necessary; and the case before us seems to be one in which it becomes unavoidable.

If a confident and arrogant individual, in setting forth his claims to the Christian character, should allow himself to say: "I only am in covenant with God. I only, of all my fellow professors, maintain a life of real communion with him. All around me are aliens and reprobates. I alone walk in the light, and in the favour of heaven:" would not every discerning neighbour be disposed, and with the utmost reason, to say to him: "Where are your testimonials? Bring forth fruits corresponding with this high claim. If you would make it good, we shall expect you to be more devoted, more spiritual, and more exemplary in every branch of Christian obedience, than any around you. Where, then, is your *evidence* of the pre-eminent character which you arrogate to yourself?" Would such a demand be deemed either uncandid or unreasonable? By no means. It is a dictate of common sense. It is the very test which the Saviour himself pre-

scribes. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." And it is very certain that, in all rational society, such a claimant, unless he could sustain himself by appealing to a temper and conversation in some measure becoming his assumption, could not fail of incurring universal contempt.

It may be truly said, that this is a simple, unexaggerated picture of the case before us. It cannot be alleged, indeed, that ALL Episcopalians prefer a claim of the character supposed. Many of them, I hope a large majority, though decided in their preference of Prelacy, are as inoffensive in their claims, as Presbyterians, or any other denomination of Christians. But the assumption of the high-church Prelatists is precisely analogous to that of the individual imagined; and, therefore, there can be nothing unjust in making the demand which I have stated. They tell us, that *their's* is the only true church; that Episcopalians alone are in covenant with God; that they alone have an authorized ministry, and valid ordinances; that all others are schismatics, rebels and outcasts, having no share in the promises of divine mercy. Now, surely, there ought to be more piety, more holy living among the peculiar people of God, than among rebels and reprobates. Surely, it is not unreasonable to demand, that those who are in covenant with Christ, and enjoy all the privileges of his holy family, should exhibit more of the "spirit of Christ" than those who are "none of his." Demonstration itself cannot be more unquestionable. To represent this as an unfair and odious comparison between two or more churches, is wholly deceptive. Nothing can be further from the truth. For, according to the high-church doctrine, the comparison between their body and other denominations, is a comparison between the *only true church*, and the "*world which lieth in wickedness.*" Now, that there should be more genuine, consistent, and truly spiritual religion in the former than in the latter, every one who believes that the church is Christ's family, and that to belong to it is a pri-

vilege of any real value, will, without hesitation, acknowledge.

What, then, in reference to this subject, is the FACT? To those who have had an opportunity of surveying and comparing different denominations of professing Christians, let the appeal be made. Are the members of the Episcopal Church, and especially those who contend for high-church principles, distinguished, above all other professors of religion, for their piety, zeal and universal holiness of practice? Are they more devout, more prayerful, more exemplary in abstaining from every appearance of evil, and in maintaining a conversation becoming the Gospel? When we look over Episcopal congregations, do we find them every where drawing to their solemn assemblies the most truly serious, spiritual and devoted classes of professors; and as manifestly repelling from their communion the giddy, the worldly, and the licentious? It is not denied, that there are many noble examples of Christian character in that denomination; but are they *more numerous* than in any other? Is it, or is it not notorious, that the great body of Episcopal churches in our land, instead of excelling all others in the strictness and purity of their religious example, are inferior to many other denominations, in those characteristics which are universally allowed to belong essentially to the spirit of Christ? Where is the Lord's day most carefully sanctified? Where does the spirit of prayer most manifestly abound? Where do revivals of religion most frequently occur? Where, in general, is there the greatest amount of sympathy for those who are "sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death," and of effort and sacrifice to send them the light of life? Where, in a word, is there the most withdrawal from the maxims and habits of a vain world, and the greatest activity and zeal in every good word and work? I ask again—Is there *more* of all these among Episcopalians than among other denominations? I do not believe there is an

Episcopalian in the United States, of common discernment and common honesty, whose conscience will allow him to answer this question in the affirmative.

Again ; how shall we account for the fact, that those who are devoted to worldly pleasure, ambition and splendour ; those who hate faithful preaching, and strict discipline ; those who wish to bear the Christian name, but not to have the trouble of any anxious thought, inquiry, or self-denial on the subject ; those who lean to the utmost laxity of religious principle, but yet do not choose openly to take their station with Unitarians and Universalists ; those, in a word, who content themselves with “the form of godliness without the power thereof ;” how, I say, shall we account for the fact, that all these are found, in general, resorting to the Episcopal, in preference to other churches, wherever there is one of that denomination at hand ; and this not because they have examined the peculiar claims of that church, and found them firmly sustained ; but because they find less to disturb them in their course of worldly pleasure ?

It is painful to present interrogatories of this kind ; but our neighbours have compelled us. I am aware, indeed, that this whole argument is often indignantly repelled by those to whom it applies, as odious and unjust. But I will venture to say, that there never was an appeal more legitimate, reasonable or resistless ; and that the advocate of high-church principles can never dispose of it but by sophistry or evasion. If the fact *be* as I have stated ; and I rather suppose it will not be questioned by any well-informed and candid Episcopalian ; then, of all wonderful facts, it is one of the most inexplicable, on the supposition that Episcopalians are the only people in covenant with God ; the only people who know any thing of holy communion with the Saviour, or who have any interest in “the exceeding great and precious promises” of his word !

XI. Another consideration occurs of deep and growing interest at the present day. It is, that the claim which I



oppose is altogether HOSTILE TO THAT HARMONY OF FEELING AND EFFORT FOR THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL, WHICH CHARACTERIZES THE PRESENT AGE.

Perhaps there is no feature of the period in which we live, more gratifying to the pious mind, and more promising with respect to the future, than the fact, that Christians of different denominations are more united in spirit than formerly; more disposed to feel as "one body in Christ," and to act together in those great plans which have for their object the diffusion of Christian knowledge, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. We have witnessed the delightful spectacle of ministers of the gospel, and private Christians, of various ecclesiastical connections, who, until lately, stood aloof from each other, coming together with fraternal affection, and cordially co-operating in efforts to send the book of God, and the glad tidings of salvation throughout the world. We have *seen* these noble coalitions in our own land, in Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, and other associations for promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of men. And we have *heard* of pious, warm hearted missionaries of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist denominations, and even, in one or two cases, Episcopalians (in whom the love of Christ and his cause happily triumphed over the love of sect), meeting on foreign shores, taking sweet counsel, and communing together as brethren in Christ, with heart-felt affection and delight. That such truly refreshing scenes are becoming more frequent, every Christian ought to rejoice, and to pray that the spirit which produces them may fill the world.

But with this spirit the high church doctrine is utterly and irreconcilably at war. Its language, even to the most pious and devoted individual breathing, out of its own pale is, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou." It refuses to co-operate with non-episcopal Christians in any thing. Even in circulating the Bible, "without note or comment," it declines to take any



part, unless its own sectarian forms can accompany every copy of the word of life. Nay, even amidst the darkness and misery of perishing millions, it can deliberately say, "Let nothing be done if it cannot be comprehended in our own enclosure. Let every plan of mercy be suspended, every effort of Christian benevolence abandoned, rather than run the risk of departing from the 'uninterrupted succession;' rather than suffer gospel ordinances to be distributed otherwise than in conformity with rigid 'canonical regularity.'" I do not mean that this is the language often uttered by the lips of high churchmen; but that it is the unavoidable and unequivocal language of their *principles*; and that these principles lead to corresponding practical results. Indeed, there is reason to fear that, in some cases even low churchmen have caught something of the infection, and manifested a spirit closely allied with that of which I speak. One professedly of this class, has been known to offer his services to a respectable missionary association for a foreign mission; but at the same time distinctly to announce, that if he should be sent forth in company with other missionaries, not Episcopally ordained, he could not possibly, when he should arrive on the foreign field, receive the sacramental symbols from *their* hands, but only when dispensed by *himself*! The missionary association in question, of course, thought it wise to decline annexing such an individual to a body, all the other members of which were of one heart, and one soul. This occurrence would not have been thought worthy of notice, did it not serve to illustrate the fact, that even some low churchmen are beginning, contrary to all their former protestations, to disclose some leaning to the high church doctrine, or, at any rate, to *act upon it*. In truth, when they are once, in any degree, entangled in the toils of the prelatical claim, it is easy to see that they can scarcely fail of finding themselves involved in embarrassments of the most serious kind.

Is it not evident, then, my Christian brethren, that the high and exclusive claim under consideration, is peculiarly unfriendly to the spirit of the present day?—a day in which the union of effort to spread the knowledge of the Gospel is manifestly increasing; when the spirit of our common Christianity is beginning, if I am not deceived, to be better understood, more deeply felt, and more divested of human additions;—when Christians are beginning to distinguish more accurately than formerly between the essentials and the forms of religion, and to see that many things, which once kept them apart, ought no longer to do so. In such a day as this, the spirit of high-church, which was always antichristian, is peculiarly unseasonable and odious; unfriendly to the universal spread of the Gospel; utterly inconsistent with harmonious effort in this great cause; fitted to create difficulty and obstacle at every step; calculated to degrade our holy religion in the eyes of the heathen; or to tempt the heathen to exchange one superstition for another, a little more decent and respectable, but, when made the ground of hope, quite as delusive and fatal as their most miserable idolatries.

Such, my respected Christian brethren, are some of my objections to the high and exclusive claim which it is the object of the following pages to disprove. It is utterly destitute of all warrant from Scripture. It is entirely unsupported by an appeal to the earliest uninspired records of the Christian church. It is, undoubtedly, an innovation on the primitive model of ecclesiastical order. The original reformers in *England* did not receive it. In the best and purest period of the reformed church in that country, it was unknown; and did not obtain a footing until orthodoxy and piety had both grievously declined. It is a claim presumptuous, unreasonable, uncharitable; generally found in connection with other errors of very unhappy tendency; unfriendly to civil and religious liberty; unsupported by

any benign and practical influence ; and unfavourable to affectionate union of effort in evangelizing the world. That which is manifestly liable to all these objections, cannot be of God, and ought not be encouraged by those who desire the real prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.

To every Presbyterian, then, in the United States, I would say, Be not deceived with the idea that the doctrine contended for by high churchmen is a mere innocent speculation ; erroneous, indeed, but likely to do little harm, even if extensively embraced. If the foregoing representation be correct, this is an entire mistake. It is a doctrine founded in important error, and replete with practical mischief. If, therefore, my beloved brethren, you wish well to the cause of Christ in our land ; if you desire to see a spirit of harmony and love growing among Christians ; if your hearts warm with the hope of seeing pure and scriptural revivals of religion pervading every part of our country ; if you would guard against every thing inimical to Christian liberty, and cherish every thing friendly to the diffusion of the genuine spirit of the gospel ;—then beware of the delusion of these men. I charge them with no sinister *intention* ; but their doctrine and claim, when traced to their legitimate consequences, are undoubtedly *calculated* to bring back the reign of Popery, and re-establish that thralldom of ecclesiastical domination, of which the world has already seen so many mournful examples. It is *adapted*—whether they design it or not—to arrest the progress of all that is simple and scriptural in principle, of all that is holy in practice, and of all that is diffusive, unshackled, fraternal, and affectionate in Christian intercourse and Christian effort.

I am aware that my character among those who know me, is that of a firm, and even zealous Presbyterian. This character I am willing to own. I have no doubt that the substance of Presbyterianism is to be found in the Bible ; that it continued to prevail in the primitive church, two

full centuries after the days of the apostles ; and that it is unspeakably better adapted than any form of church government, to bind the body of Christ together in truth, love, holy living, and universal edification. Yet, I am free to say, that, much as I love this form of ecclesiastical order, I consider it as a *trifle* when brought into competition with the great interests of vital piety, and the salvation of the souls of men. I have no more doubt that a church may exist and flourish under a different form, than I have that a man may be pious, without being a Calvinist in his doctrinal belief. When I meet with an Episcopal brother, who, though he decisively prefers prelacy, and thinks he can find it in primitive antiquity ; yet forbears to put his bishop in the place of the Saviour, and preaches the truth in love—I regard him with cordial affection, and can unfeignedly wish well, not only to his person, but also to his ministry. Nay, I consider the success of *any* religious party ; the triumph of *any* external denomination, as unworthy of regard, when compared with the great object of “ turning men from darkness to light, and from the power “ of Satan to the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” If I am not utterly deceived, I love a pious, warm hearted, exemplary Episcopalian, more, far more than a cold, formal worldly Presbyterian. Nor have I the smallest desire that Episcopalians should surrender their decided preference for prelacy, or their firm belief in its apostolic origin, for the sake of pleasing other denominations. This would be an unreasonable demand. All I lament, is, that they lay a degree of stress on an outward form which the Bible knows nothing of ; and that they adopt a principle, without the slightest warrant, which necessarily leads to a system of proscription, denunciation, and war toward all other Protestant churches. I abhor the thought of making the form of ecclesiastical polity a fundamental of Christianity. You may be ZEALOUS PRESBYTERIANS, and yet not REAL CHRISTIANS. And just in proportion to the degree in which

you possess the genuine spirit of Christ, will you disapprove of the error, in whomsoever it is found, of placing rites and forms among the essentials of religion.

Allow me to say, my respected friends. that *this* is the Presbyterianism which I would earnestly recommend to you. Not that inordinate attachment to a name and a form which is the offspring of narrow views, sectarian feelings, and blind prejudice; but that candid, sober preference, which places ecclesiastical order where it ought to be placed, as a *secondary* matter;—and which recognizes the fact, that men may entertain different views on this subject, and yet be equally pious believers, and, of course, equally safe in their hopes of heaven. This, I have reason to believe, is the prevailing sentiment, both among ministers and people, of the body to which we are so happy as to belong. May it ever be one of our laudable distinctions! Let nothing tempt you to depart from this sentiment. Never permit even the sectarian violence of other denominations to drive you into an imitation of their unhallowed spirit. Let them denounce your ministry, and sneer at your ordinances and your hopes. Be it your resolution to return good for evil; and to love and honour them as brethren in Christ, as far as they appear to bear his image, although they may reject and vilify you. Remember that their acknowledging you, or refusing to do it, is nothing, if Christ acknowledge you. When the Judaizing teachers, in the days of *Paul*, urged an adherence to the ceremonial observances of the old economy, as necessary to salvation; the apostle, who had been better taught, instead of manifesting any anxiety for the safety of himself, and his fellow disciples, who rejected the Jewish doctrine and who were thus denounced, seemed chiefly concerned for the welfare of those who were carried away by this delusion, and to guard others against its influence. In like manner, so far from being doubtful whether you may be saved out of the Episcopal church, my deep conviction is, that the danger is all the other way;—

that there is **REAL DANGER**—not in being found in an Episcopal church, as such ; for there I have no doubt there may be as ardent piety, and as precious, well founded hopes as in the Presbyterian or any other : but **REAL DANGER** in being found in an ecclesiastical inclosure in which the high church doctrine, with all its usual spirit and accompanying errors, form the prevalent system. But even toward the advocates of these, guard against a spirit of acrimony or retaliation. Compassionate their error. Pray without ceasing for their illumination. And endeavour to win them by the patient exercise of a kind, respectful, and fraternal spirit. However the manifestation of such a spirit may be received by *them*, it will promote *your own* comfort and benefit, both with God and man. No good effort was ever lost ; no holy temper was ever exercised in vain.

Let none say, that the design of these remarks is to cast odium on a large, and, certainly, very respectable denomination of Christians. I again declare, that nothing is further from my design. Against *Episcopalians*, as a body, I have not the smallest disposition to say a word. With respect to them, as well as various other denominations around me, whom I can respect and love while I differ from them: I would say—may God bless and prosper them in all their honest endeavours to bring men to the saving knowledge, love, and obedience of the truth ! But episcopacy, as a form of ecclesiastical government, and the decided preference and use of it, as marking a sect of Christians, *may* be distinguished, and *must* be distinguished from the doctrine and spirit of high-churchmen. They **WERE** distinguished by *Cranmer, Grindal, Abbot, Hall, and Usher*, in former days of the church of *England* ; and by *Tillotson, Wake, Secker, Newton, Scott*, and others, in later times. All these were Episcopalians, and most of them eminent prelates ; none of them, however, were high-churchmen, but renounced and abhorred their doctrine, and the claim resulting from it, as much as we do. And one of the most



learned of them all, Archbishop *Wake*, expressly stigmatizes the advocates of this doctrine as "*madmen*." With *such* Episcopalians, every contemporary Presbyterian lived in peace; and with such men, we may and do live in peace now. There are points of difference between us; but nothing to interfere with Christian love and good neighbourhood. But the doctrine which is sometimes found *among* Episcopalians; which attained very little currency or popularity in the church of *England*, until the time of Archbishop *Laud*, of inglorious memory; which, from that time to this, we have reason to be thankful, has been the doctrine of only a minority of the Protestant Episcopal Church; and which it is really an imposition on public credulity to identify with that church, as a Christian denomination;—this doctrine, which but faintly disguises its Popish character, *is* odious, and ought to be so considered; and I do not deny that it is my intention to hold it up to public odium whenever I have occasion to speak of it. It is a system of belief, and of action, which not only declares war against all other denominations; but its very element is war, and so far as the views and wishes of those who wage it go, nothing less than a war of extermination. Is it inconsistent with either Christian candour or charity to represent such a system as worthy of being held up to public odium?

It militates nothing against this representation to allege, that the men who advocate this exclusive system are honest in their convictions, and benevolent in their intentions. This is not denied or doubted. But so, unquestionably, is the serious Romanist, when he proclaims eternal perdition as inevitable to all who are not in communion with the bishop of Rome; and denounces the same penalty against all who reject the penances and absolutions dispensed by his "*priesthood*." But neither the sincerity of his belief in what he tells us, nor the kindness of his intentions in warning us of a danger which he unfeignedly considers as



real, can alter the odious character of the dogmas which he urges; or diminish the obligation resting upon every one who loves the happiness or the liberty of his country, to set himself against them with fixed and firm opposition.

With the *intentions* of high-churchmen we have nothing to do; but the *spirit* and *tendency* of their claims we are bound, as members of the Church of Christ, to understand, and to place in a proper light before ourselves and others. Fidelity to our Master in heaven demands this of us. The best interests of our children, who may be misled by their plausible confidence, demand it of us. The duty which we owe to our truly primitive and apostolic Church requires it at our hands. Nay, we are called to this duty by the obligations which, as patriots, we owe to the rights and privileges of our beloved country. Never was there a *country* or an *age*, in which the claim in question was less in accordance, than that in which our lot is cast. The happy civil constitutions under which we live, regarding with equal eye all denominations, call upon our several Churches, in the most emphatic language, to live in peace with one another. The great movements in the religious world which mark the beginning of the nineteenth century, proclaim as loudly and solemnly as the events of any period ever did, that all the real friends of Christ ought to be united against the common enemy, and in support of their common Christianity. Is this a country, and is this a day in which the very thought can be admitted, that professing Christians should spend their time in “doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof come envy, railings, evil surmisings, and corrupt disputings?” Is this a time for “*Judah* to vex *Ephraim*, and *Ephraim* to vex *Judah*,” when there is so much common ground on which both may peacefully stand; and when the importunate cries of a dying and supplicating world—cries which ought to move the hearts and summon the energies of all Christians, to the great work of sending the bread

and the water of life to famishing millions? Whatever others may do, my Christian friends, be it far from you to indulge a spirit unworthy of the name you bear. Be it your constant care to "study the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another." And then, whatever may become of this controversy, as a matter of logical discussion, you will be certain of the best of all victories,—a victory over unhallowed tempers and practices; a victory over strife and division; and over every thing that interferes with the union and edification of the body of Christ.

I am, my Christian Brethren,

Your affectionate servant in the Gospel,

SAMUEL MILLER.

*Princeton, Sept. 16th, 1830.*



**LETTERS**  
ON  
**THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.**

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**LETTER I.**

INTRODUCTORY.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

RELIGION is the common business of all men. Its duties cannot be performed by delegation. Every man is required to examine, to believe, and to obey the gospel for himself, and for himself to receive the promised reward. We may commit other concerns to the wisdom and fidelity of our fellow-men : but the care of his own soul belongs to each individual ; and if he neglect it, no solicitude, no exertions on the part of others, can possibly avail him.

But although religion be a concern which equally belongs to every man, yet it has pleased the all-wise Head of the Church to appoint an order of men more particularly to *minister in holy things*: not to supersede the attention of other individuals to this object, but to stimulate, to guide, and in various ways to assist them in this attention. For when this divine Instructor *ascended up on high, he gave some to be prophets, and some apostles, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

*Prophets and apostles* are no longer continued in the Church ; because the immediate *inspiration*, and the *miraculous powers* with which they were endowed, are no longer necessary in dispensing the gospel. But though the age of inspired men, and of miracles be past, the Redeemer still continues the ministry of reconciliation. He still continues to raise up and send forth a

succession of ambassadors, to declare his will, and to offer pardon and life to a fallen race.

The office sustained by ministers of the gospel is designated in scripture by a variety of names. They are sometimes called *Bishops*, because they are *overseers* of the flock committed to their charge. They are frequently styled *Presbyters*, or *Elders*, which are words of the same import, because, if not really advanced in age, they are bound to maintain the dignity and gravity of ecclesiastical rulers. They are denominated *Pastors*, because it is their duty to feed the flock of God. They are called *Doctors* and *Teachers*, because they are required to instruct those committed to their care, in the doctrines and duties of religion. They are said to be *Ambassadors*, importing that their duty is to declare the will of their Sovereign, and to negotiate a peace between the offended Majesty of heaven and guilty men. They are represented as *Ministers* or *Servants*, because in all that they lawfully say and do, they act under the authority of a Master, whose declared will is their guide. They are *Stewards of the mysteries of God*, having the spiritual provisions of his house committed to them to be dispensed. They are *Watchmen*, being placed to guard the welfare of Zion, to give notice to men of their danger, and to exercise a vigilant care over all the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. They are *Shepherds*, inasmuch as they are appointed to feed, protect, guide, and govern the flock, under the direction of the Chief Shepherd. And, finally, according to the language of scripture, they are *Workmen* and *Labourers*, because they have a particular task assigned them; and because a faithful discharge of their duties requires diligence, exertion, and persevering labour.

Every thing relating to the Christian Church is important, and worthy of our serious attention. But it too often happens, that, on account of particular states of society, or other peculiar circumstances, some portions of the system of revealed truth are less regarded and examined than their relative importance demands. Accordingly, it has appeared to me, for several years past, that the order of Christ and his apostles respecting the CHRISTIAN MINISTRY, is a subject which has received less of your attention, and is, by many of you, less understood than it ought to be by those who profess to be members of that holy community, which

ministers are appointed to serve and to govern. If all the interests of the Church are precious in the view of every enlightened Christian, it is evident that the *mode of organization* cannot be a trivial concern ; and if the Saviour, or those who were immediately taught by his Spirit, have laid down any rules, or given us any information on this subject, it behoves us carefully to study what they have delivered, and to make it our *constant* guide. Under these impressions, I have determined to request your candid attention to some remarks on the doctrine held by our Church respecting the Christian Ministry, and especially as to the points in which we differ, on this subject, from our *Episcopal* brethren.

You will do me the justice to acknowledge, that, in the course of my ministry among you, I have never manifested a spirit of bigotry or disputation. Indeed, some of you, I know, have considered me as too reluctant to engage in the public discussion of various subjects disputed between our Church and those of other religious denominations. My great attachment to peace among Christians, and my earnest desire to promote that charity without which faith and hope are vain, have always rendered me unwilling to embark in controversy. My readers, therefore, will do me great injustice if they suppose that any thing in the following sheets is dictated by a spirit of animosity or bitterness towards any portion of the religious community, or is intended to cherish such a spirit in others. My object is, not to intrude into another society for the purpose of making proselytes ; not to disturb the convictions, or irritate the feelings of any who are fixed in a different creed from mine ; but to inform and satisfy you, who are not only of my own denomination, but more particularly committed to my charge, that *you have not followed cunningly devised fables*; that you are connected with a Church as nearly conformed to apostolic and primitive order as any on earth : and that Christian ordinances come to you in a channel at least as pure and legitimate, and in a manner at least as agreeable to the *simplicity that is in Christ*, as to those who make the most extravagant and exclusive claims.

In the discussion of all controverted subjects it is of the utmost importance to ascertain, at the commencement, the precise state of the question. Much has been said and written on the main subject of dispute between the Presbyterian and Episcopal

Churches, without understanding, or, if they were understood, without distinguishing, the points in which these denominations agree, and in which they differ. To guard against mistakes here, it will be proper to state explicitly, in what respects their opinions are at variance.

We agree with our Episcopal brethren in believing, that Christ hath appointed Officers in his Church to preach the word, to administer sacraments, to dispense discipline, and to commit these powers to other faithful men. We believe, as fully as they, that there are different classes and denominations of officers in the Church of Christ; and that, among these, there is, and ought to be, a due *subordination*. We concur with them in maintaining, that none are regularly invested with the ministerial character, or can with propriety be recognized in this character, but those who have been set apart to the office by persons lawfully clothed with the power of ordaining. We unite with such of them as hold the opinion, that Christians, in all ages, are bound to make the apostolic order of the church, with respect to the ministry, as well as other points, the model, as far as possible, of all their ecclesiastical arrangements. And, finally, we contend, equally with them, that both the *name* and the *office* of *Bishop* were found in the primitive Church, and ought to be retained to the end of time. Many Episcopalians of narrow views, and of slender information, seem to take it for granted that we discard *Bishops* in every sense of the word; and therefore, when they find this term in scripture, or in early uninspired writers, they exult, as if the word established their claim. But nothing can be more unfounded than this triumph. We all acknowledge that there were *Bishops* in the days of the apostles, and that there must be *Bishops* in every regularly constituted Church in every age.\*

But we differ from that denomination of Christians in our views

\* In the *Form of Government* of the Presbyterian Church, the pastors of Churches are expressly styled *Bishops*; and this title is recommended to be retained, as both *scriptural* and *appropriate*. The same may be proved with respect to most, if not all the Reformed Churches. I am sensible that this title, as applied to ordinary pastors, has been the subject of much ridicule among the friends of prelacy; a ridicule, however, which recoils with double force upon those who thus betray a want of acquaintance with the primitive application of the word.



of the *character* and *powers* of Church officers. They suppose that there are three orders in the Christian ministry, viz. *Bishops*, *Presbyters*, and *Deacons*: The first possessing the highest ecclesiastical power; the second invested with authority to preach and administer both sacraments; and the third empowered only to preach and baptize. We suppose, on the other hand, that there is, properly speaking, but one order of gospel ministers; that there are, indeed, two other classes of Church officers, viz. *ruling Elders*, and *Deacons*; but that neither of these are authorized to *labour in the word and doctrine*, or to administer either of the Christian sacraments. We suppose that there is a plain distinction made in scripture between *Elders* who only *rule*, and *Elders* who, to the power of ruling, join also that of *teaching* and administering *sealing* ordinances. And we believe, that the friends of modern Episcopacy, in considering *Deacons* as an order of *Clergy*, and in empowering them to preach and baptize, are chargeable with a departure from the apostolic pattern.

But we differ from our Episcopal brethren, principally, with respect to the *character* and *powers* of the scriptural *Bishop*. They contend that *Bishops* are an order of ministers superior to *Presbyters*, having a different ordination, different powers, and a different sphere of duty. That while *Presbyters* have a right, by virtue of their office, to preach the word, and administer sacraments, to *Bishops* exclusively belong the powers of *ordination*, *confirmation*, and *government*. On the other hand, we maintain, that there is but one order of ministers of the gospel in the Christian Church; that every regular pastor of a congregation is a scriptural *Bishop*; or, in other words, that every *Presbyter*, who has been set apart, by *the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*, and who has the pastoral charge of a particular Church, is, to all intents and purposes, in the sense of scripture, and of the primitive Church, a *Bishop*; having a right, in company with others, his equals, to ordain, and to perform every service pertaining to the Episcopal office. We can discover no warrant, either from the word of God, or from the early history of the Church, for what is called the *Diocesan Episcopacy*, or the pre-eminence and authority of one man, under the title of *Bishop*, or any other title, over a number of Presbyters and Churches: On the contrary, we are persuaded and affirm, that Christ and his

Apostles expressly discountenanced such claims of pre-eminence; and that all those forms of ecclesiastical government which are built upon these claims, are corruptions of apostolic simplicity, and deviations from the primitive order of the Church.

This being the case, you will readily perceive the necessity of clearly marking and keeping in view a distinction between the primitive and the modern sense of the word *Bishop*. Accordingly, in the perusal of the following sheets, you are earnestly requested to recollect, at every step, that by a *scriptural* or *primitive Bishop*, is always meant a Presbyter, Minister, Pastor, or whatever else he may be called, who has the pastoral care of a particular congregation; and that by *scriptural* or *primitive Episcopacy*, is meant that government of the Church, by such Bishops, which existed in pure apostolic times, and for near two hundred years afterwards. And, on the other hand, that, by *modern Bishops*, and *modern Episcopacy*, is meant that government of the Church by prelates, which took its rise from ecclesiastical ambition, long after the days of the apostles, and which, with other innovations on primitive order, has since claimed to rest on the authority of Christ.

It ought further to be understood, that among those who espouse the Episcopal side in this controversy, there are three classes.

I. The *first* consists of those who believe that neither Christ nor his Apostles laid down any particular form of ecclesiastical government, to which the Church is bound to adhere in all ages. That every Church is free, consistently with the divine will, to frame her constitution agreeably to her own views, to the state of society, and to the exigencies of particular times. These prefer the Episcopal government, and some of them believe that it was the primitive form; but they consider it as resting on the ground of *human expediency* alone, and not of *divine appointment*. This is well known to have been the opinion of Archbishops *Cranmer*, *Grindal*, and *Whitgift*; of Bishop *Leighton*, of Bishop *Jewel*, of Dr. *Whitaker*, of Bishop *Reynolds*, of Archbishop *Tillotson*, of Bishop *Burnet*, of Bishop *Croft*, of Dr. *Stillingfleet*, and of a long list of the most learned and pious divines of the Church of England, from the reformation down to the present day.

II. Another class of Episcopalians go further. They suppose that the government of the Church by *Bishops*, as a superior order to *Presbyters*, was sanctioned by apostolic example, and that it is the

duty of all Churches to imitate this example. But while they consider episcopacy as necessary to the *perfection* of the Church, they grant that it is by no means necessary to her *existence*; and accordingly, without hesitation, acknowledge as true Churches of Christ, many in which the Episcopal doctrine is rejected, and Presbyterian principles made the basis of ecclesiastical government. The advocates of this opinion, also, have been numerous and respectable, both among the clerical and lay members of the Episcopal Churches in England, and the United States. In this list appear the venerable names of Bishop *Hall*, Bishop *Downham*, Bishop *Bancroft*, Bishop *Andrews*, Archbishop *Usher*, Bishop *Forbes*, the learned *Chillingworth*, Archbishop *Wake*, Bishop *Hoadly*, and many more, whose declarations on the subject will be more particularly detailed in another place.

III. A third class go much beyond either of the former. While they grant that God has left men at liberty to modify every other kind of government according to circumstances, they contend that one form of government for the Church is unalterably fixed by divine appointment; that this form is Episcopal; that it is absolutely *essential* to the *existence* of the Church; that, of course, wherever it is wanting, there is no church, no regular ministry, no valid ordinances; and that all who are united with religious societies, not conforming to this order, are "aliens from Christ," "out of the appointed road to heaven," and have no hope but in the "uncovenanted mercies of God."

It is confidently believed that the two former classes taken together, embrace at least nineteen parts out of twenty of all the Episcopalians in Great Britain and the United States; while, so far as can be learned from the most respectable writings, and other authentic sources of information, it is only the small remaining proportion who hold the extravagant opinions assigned to the third and last of these classes.

Against these exorbitant claims there is, prior to all inquiry into their evidence, a strong general presumption, for the following reasons:

*First*—It is placing a point of external order on a par with the *essence* of religion. I readily grant, that every observance which the great Head of the Church enjoins by express precept, is indispensably binding. But it is certainly contrary to the genius of the

Gospel dispensation, which is pre-eminently distinguished from the Mosaic economy by its simplicity and spirituality, to place forms of outward order among those things which are essential to the very existence of the Church. We know from scripture, that the visible form of the Church has been repeatedly altered, without affecting her essence.

*Secondly*—Against this doctrine there is another ground of presumption; because it represents the rite of *ordination* as of superior importance to the whole system of divine truth and ordinances, which it is the duty of Christian ministers to dispense. According to this doctrine, *Presbyters* are fully authorized to preach that *Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*; to admit members into the Church by baptism; to administer the Lord's supper; and, in short, to engage in all those ministrations which are necessary to *edify the body of Christ*: but to the regular introduction of a minister into office, by the imposition of hands, they are not competent. Is not this, in other words, maintaining, that the Gospel is inferior to its ministers; that the sacraments are less solemn and elevated ordinances than a rite, which all Protestants allow not to be a sacrament; that the dispensation of God's truth is a less dignified function, than selecting and setting apart a servant of the truth; that the *means* are more important than the *end*? If so, then every man of sound mind will pronounce, that, against such a doctrine, there is, antecedent to all inquiry, a reasonable and strong presumption.

*Thirdly*—If it be admitted, that there are no true ministers but those who are episcopally ordained; and that none are in communion with Christ, excepting those who receive the ordinances of his Church from the hands of ministers thus ordained; then Christian character, and all the marks by which we are to judge of it, will be placed on new ground; ground of which the scriptures say nothing; and which it is impossible for one Christian in a thousand to investigate. When the word of God describes a real Christian, it is in such language as this—*He is born of the Spirit; he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. He believes in Christ and repents of all sin. He crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts: he delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man:—he strives*

*against sin: he is meek, humble, full of mercy and good fruits: he loves his brethren whom he hath seen, as well as God whom he hath not seen: he is zealous of good works: and makes it his constant study to imbibe the Spirit, and to imitate the example of the Redeemer.* These are the evidences of Christian character which fill the New Testament, and which meet us wherever the subject is discussed. According to this representation, the only *essential* prerequisite to holding communion with Christ, is being united to him by a living faith; that faith which purifies the heart, and is productive of good works. But if the extravagant doctrine which we oppose be admitted; then no man, however abundantly he may possess all these characteristics, can be in communion with Christ, unless he is also in communion with the Episcopal Church. That is, his claim to the Christian character cannot be established by exhibiting a holy temper and life; but depends on his being in the line of a certain ecclesiastical descent. In other words, the inquiry whether he is in covenant with Christ, is not to be answered by evidences of personal sanctification; but resolves itself into a question of clerical *genealogy*, which few Christians in the world are capable of examining, and which no mortal can certainly establish. There is no possibility of avoiding this conclusion on the principle assumed. And I appeal to you, my brethren, whether a principle which involves such consequences, has not strong presumption against it.

✓ *Fourthly*—If the doctrine in question be admitted, then we virtually pronounce nine-tenths of the whole Protestant world to be in a state of excommunication from Christ. I know it has been often said, by zealous writers on this subject, that the great body of the Protestant Churches are Episcopal; and that those who adopt the Presbyterian government make but a very small portion of the whole number. But I need not tell those who are acquainted with the history of the Church since the reformation, and with the present state of the Christian world, that this representation is wholly incorrect. The very reverse is true; as I shall more fully show in a subsequent letter. Are we then prepared to adopt a principle which cuts off so large a portion of the Protestant world from the visible Church, and represents it as in a state in some respects worse than that of the heathen? It is to be presumed that every considerate man will require the most pointed evidence of

divine warrant, before he admits a principle so tremendous in its consequences.

It is not asserted that these considerations prove the extravagant episcopal doctrine from which they flow to be false. A doctrine may be unpalatable, and yet true. Whatever is plainly revealed in scripture, we are to receive without any regard to consequences. But when a principle is repugnant to reason, contradicts the analogy of faith, and involves consequences deeply wounding to the bosom of charity, we may safely pronounce that there is a presumption against it, antecedent to all inquiry; and that before we embrace such a principle, the evidence of its divine warrant ought to be more than commonly clear and decisive.

With the great body of Episcopalians in this country, and elsewhere, it is extremely easy to live on the most friendly terms. Though attached to the peculiarities of their own denomination, they extend the language and the spirit of charity to other Churches. We, of course, think them in error, because we are persuaded that Episcopacy, in the form for which they contend, is an innovation. Yet as long as they keep within the bounds of that liberal preference and zeal for their own forms, both of government and worship, which every man ought to cherish for the Church with which he connects himself, we must approve of their sincerity, while we cannot unite with them in opinion. But with those (and and we have reason to be thankful that the number is very small) who make exclusive claims, of a nature nearly allied to the doctrine of Popish infallibility; who declare that their own Church and the Roman Catholic, are the only Churches of Christ among us; who embrace every opportunity of denouncing all other ministers, as presumptuous intruders into the sacred office, their ministrations a nullity, and those who attend on them as aliens from the covenant of grace; with these it is not so easy to live in that harmonious and affectionate intercourse which is highly desirable among Christians of different denominations. But even toward *these*, it is your duty to cultivate a spirit of forbearance and charity; and while you are careful to arm yourselves with the means of defence against their attacks, remember that you are bound to make allowance for their prejudices, to forgive their uncharitableness, and to pity their delusion. Among depraved and erring mortals, differences of opinion will ever exist. The



most pious and exemplary Christians cannot always agree, especially on subjects of minor importance connected with religion. Make it your study, then, to be unanimous in affection towards Christians of every name, however you may be compelled to differ from many of them in opinion. Never forget, however others may act as if they forgot, that all real believers are *one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*. It is my earnest wish that this sentiment may be deeply impressed on my own heart while I write, and on yours while you read. For though, with respect to the subject on which I am about to address you, I am *fully persuaded in my own mind*; and though I confidently believe that our views of the Christian ministry are not only just, but also highly important in their practical influence; yet I have no doubt that many who differ on subjects of this nature, are followers of the same master, are building on the same foundation, and will finally dwell together in that world of perfect love, where men shall *come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of our Father*.

You will, perhaps, ask me, whether those who sincerely hold the high-toned Episcopal notions which have been mentioned, can be reasonably blamed for endeavouring to propagate them? Nay, whether it is not as much their duty as their right to do so, while they entertain these convictions? I answer, such persons are to be viewed in the same light with those who *conscientiously* believe (and no doubt there are many such) that *transubstantiation* is a doctrine of scripture; that the *Pope* is infallible; that *images* are a great help to devotion; and that there is no salvation out of the pale of the Church of *Rome*. Persons who hold these opinions are not to be blamed for wishing to disseminate doctrines which they regard as true and important; but they are to be both blamed and pitied for believing them, when the means of gaining more correct views are within their reach; for setting up a standard of duty and of Christian character which the Saviour never knew; and *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*. Paul, when he was persecuting the Church of Christ and wasting it, *verily thought within himself* that he was *doing God service*; yet we have the best authority for saying that this miserable mistake did not render him blameless in the sight of heaven.

The truth is, every sect of Christians must be considered as having a right to maintain and propagate those opinions, which they sincerely believe to be true; and others have an equal right, and are equally bound, when they see errors propagated, to examine, and, with a suitable spirit, to expose and refute them. Nor are discussions of this kind by any means to be regarded as useless. When conducted with the meekness and benevolence of the Gospel, they are productive of various substantial benefits. *Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

Had any of the numerous works which have been published on the subject of these letters been in general circulation among you, or had it been easy to put them in circulation, I should have thought it unnecessary to ask your attention to the following sheets. But as most of those works are too voluminous to be generally read; as several of the best of them are in a language not generally understood; as many of them contain much matter inapplicable to the state of our country; and as others, being intended to answer particular purposes, are too confined in their views, I have thought myself justifiable in attempting to lay the subject before you in a form somewhat different from that of any work with which I am acquainted. And in doing this, I am not without the hope, that you will be disposed to receive with some partiality, and to peruse with a kind interest, an address from one who has laboured sincerely, though with many infirmities, for many years, to promote your spiritual interest, and who *has no greater pleasure than to see you walking in the truth.*

To treat the question considered in the following pages, in all its extent, and even to present the principal arguments with a fulness desirable to some readers, would be to fill several volumes. In contracting the discussion, therefore, within the limits of this little manual, I have laid myself under the necessity of being every where extremely brief, and of totally excluding many topics, both of argument and illustration, which might be profitably introduced. But, amidst this unavoidable brevity, I hope you will do me the justice to believe, that no assertion will be made but what I conscientiously consider as susceptible of the most abundant proof; that no arguments will be stated, but those which I believe to have stood immovably solid, after every attempt to answer them; that no authorities will be produced, but those which are generally admitted to be of the most respectable character; and, in a word,

that the whole subject will be presented as fairly and impartially as I am able to present it. With respect to *authorities*, indeed, I have endeavoured, in all cases in which I could obtain access to them, to quote the most distinguished Episcopal writers themselves. The concessions of learned and wary adversaries, in favour of our doctrines, carry with them peculiar weight.

But before I conclude this introductory letter, suffer me, my dear brethren, to remind you,<sup>1</sup> that the names and powers of Christ's ministers, and the form of government adopted in his Church, though objects of inquiry, on various accounts, highly interesting, are yet to be numbered among the *externals* of religion. You may entertain perfectly correct opinions on these subjects, and yet, after all, have no just claim to the Christian character. You may be connected with the purest Church on earth, and may receive all its ordinances, from the hands of the most regular and valid ministry in Christendom, and yet be *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise*. It is true, the externals of religion have a closer connexion with its spirit and power than is commonly imagined; but still they are externals only, and must not be suffered to usurp a disproportioned share of our regard. The scriptures speak to us frequently respecting the outward organization of the Church; but they speak to us much more frequently; they dwell with much more fervent and solemn emphasis, on that faith, which unites the soul to Jesus Christ; that repentance which is unto life; and that holiness of temper and of practice, *without which no man can see the Lord*. Let me beseech you, then, to remember, in every stage of this discussion, that, *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature*; and that, while *one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, and another, I am of Cephas*, unless we are all of *Christ*, united to him by a vital faith, and built upon him as the only foundation of our hope, we cannot see the kingdom of God. "Every believer in Jesus," says an eminent Episcopalian, "who is a partaker of the grace of God in truth, is a member of the true Church, to whatever particular denomination of Christians he may belong; without this, Popes, Bishops, Presbyters, Pastors, or Deacons, are but the limbs of Antichrist and of the Synagogue of Satan; and belong to no Church which the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls will acknowledge for his own."

## LETTER II.

## TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN all disputes relating either to the faith or the practice of Christians, the first, and the grand question is, *What saith the Scripture?* This is the ultimate and the only infallible standard. Whatever is not found in the Bible cannot be considered, in any sense, as *essential* either to the doctrine or the order of the Church. This maxim is especially applicable to the subject now under discussion. As the Christian ministry is an office deriving its existence and its authority solely from Jesus Christ, the King and Head of his Church, it is obvious that his Word is the *only* rule by which any claims to this office can properly be tried, and the duties and powers of those who bear it, ascertained. Every other standard is unauthorized, variable, and uncertain. On the word of God alone can we with confidence and safety rely for direction in things relating to his spiritual kingdom. The declarations of two eminent Episcopal writers on this subject are just and weighty. "The Scripture," says *Dr. Sherlock*, "is all of a piece; every part of it agrees with the rest. The Fathers many times contradict themselves and each other." In the same strain speaks the celebrated *Chillingworth*.—"I, for my part, after a long, and (as I verily hope and believe) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my feet, but upon this rock only, viz. the Scripture. I see plainly, and with my own eyes, councils against councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age, and the Church of one age against the Church of another age."—But it is needless to multiply reasonings or authorities on this subject. The *sufficiency* and *infallibility* of the Scriptures alone, as a rule of faith and practice, was assumed

as the grand principle of the Reformation from Popery, and is acknowledged to be the foundation of the Protestant cause.

Let us, then, examine what the Scriptures say on the point in dispute. And here it is proper to premise, that whoever expects to find any formal or explicit decisions on this subject, delivered by Christ or his apostles, will be disappointed. It is true, the discourses of the Saviour, and the writings of those who were inspired with the knowledge of his will, contain many observations and instructions concerning the Christian ministry: but they are chiefly employed in prescribing the qualifications, and urging the duties of those who serve God in the Gospel of his Son, rather than in defining their titles, in settling questions of rank and precedence among them, or in guarding the immunities and honours of their office. The necessity of knowledge, piety, zeal, diligence, self-denial, meekness, patience, fortitude, and eminent holiness, in ministers of the Gospel, is urged with a frequency, a minuteness, and a force, which evince that, in the estimation of infinite Wisdom, they are regarded as of primary importance. While questions respecting priority, and grades, and privileges, are never once formally discussed, only occasionally alluded to, and then in a manner so indistinct and cursory as to show that they were considered as objects of inferior moment. What are we to infer from this want of absolute explicitness in the sacred writings? Not that Church Government is a matter of small importance. It would be easy to prove that this is a very mischievous extreme. But we certainly *must* infer, that the Spirit of God does not teach us to lay so much stress on points of ecclesiastical order, as on those precious doctrines which relate immediately to the Christian character and hope, which “form the essence, and fill the volume of the sacred records.”

But while the scriptures present no formal or explicit decisions on this subject, we find in them a mode of *expression* and a number of *facts*, from which we may, without difficulty, ascertain the outlines of the apostolic plan of Church order. By a careful attention to this language, and to these facts, if I mistake not, it will be easy to show—

I That Christ gave but one commission for the office of the Gospel ministry, and that this office, of course, is one.

II That the words *Bishop*, and *Elder*, or *Presbyter*, are uniformly

used in the New Testament as convertible titles for the same office.

III That the same *character* and *powers* which are ascribed, in the sacred writings, to *Bishops*, are also ascribed to *Presbyters*; thus plainly establishing the identity of *order*, as well as of *name*. And finally,

IV That the Christian Church was organized by the apostles after the model of the *Jewish Synagogue*, which was unquestionably Presbyterian in its form.\*

If these four positions can be established, there will remain no doubt on any candid mind how the question in dispute ought to be decided.

I. It is evident that Christ gave but one commission for the office of the Gospel ministry, and that this office, of course, is one.

The commission which our Lord gave to his apostles, and in them to his ministers in every age, is expressed in the following words—*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.† Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost—whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.‡* These passages form the grand commission under which all lawful ministers have acted from the moment in which it was delivered to the present time; and under which they must and will act to the end of the world.

This commission, it is confessed on all hands, was originally given to one order of ministers only, viz. the eleven Apostles. The

\* Though the word *Presbyterian* is commonly used to designate those Churches, which are governed by *Presbyteries* and *Synods*, as the Churches of *Geneva*, *Holland*, *Scotland*, and those of this denomination in the *United States*; yet all those Churches are, in the leading sense of the word, *Presbyterian*, in which *Presbyters* ordain, and are regarded as holding the highest ecclesiastical office.

† Matth. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

‡ John xx. 21, 22, 23.



seventy disciples had been employed on a temporary service, and that, strictly speaking, under the Jewish dispensation. For as the Christian Church did not receive its distinct constitution till after the resurrection of Christ; as the Apostles were made fixed officers of the Church, by virtue of this new commission, and not of any former appointment; and as no such new commission was given to the seventy disciples, it is manifest that they are not to be considered as ministers of the New Testament dispensation at all. The Saviour, then, in this last solemn interview, addressed the eleven only. To them he committed the whole ministerial authority in his kingdom. The commission, therefore, when it was first delivered, certainly constituted no more than one order of Gospel ministers.

That this commission embraces the highest and fullest ecclesiastical power, that has been, is, or can be possessed by any of the ministers of Christ, all Protestants allow. And that it conveys a right to preach the word, to administer sacraments, and to ordain other men to the work of the ministry, Episcopalians, as well as others, grant. Now this commission either expired with the apostles, to whom it was originally delivered, or it did not. If it did expire with them, then no ministers of the Gospel, since their day, have had any commission, for there is no other left on record. But if it did not expire with them, then it is directed equally to their successors in all ages. But who are these successors? Demonstrably all those who are authorized to perform those functions which this commission recognizes, that is, to preach, and to administer the sealing ordinances of the Church. Every minister of the Gospel, therefore, who has these powers, is a successor of the apostles, is authorized by this commission, and stands on a footing of official equality with those to whom it was originally delivered, so far as their office was ordinary and perpetual.

It is remarkable, that, in this commission, dispensing *the Word of life*, and administering *Sacraments*, are held forth as the most prominent, important, and solemn duties of Christian ministers. The power of *ordaining* others is not mentioned at all; and we only infer that it is included, because the commission recognizes the continuance of the office and duties of ministers *to the end of the world*. Must we not infer then, that all who have a right to *preach* and *baptise*, have a right, of course, to *ordain*? Does it



comport with the spirit of this commission, to represent the former functions, which are mentioned with so much distinctness and solemnity, as pertaining to the lowest order in the Church; and the latter, which is only included by inference, as reserved for a higher order? Those who are confessed to have the most important and distinguished powers conveyed by a commission, must be considered as possessing the whole. *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

There seems to be no method of evading the force of this argument, but by supposing, that the ministerial powers conveyed by this commission, were *afterwards divided*; and that, while some retained the *whole*, others were invested with only a *part* of these powers. In other words, that the same commission, since the days of the apostles, makes some *Bishops*, clothed with the highest powers, and other *Presbyters*, with powers of a subordinate kind. But does not this supposition carry with it its own refutation? Can one form of investiture constitute different orders? Formal reasoning cannot be necessary to set aside such an absurdity. But were the supposition which has been stated ever so legitimate on the score of reasoning, it is altogether unsupported in point of fact. Where is the evidence of this pretended *division* of ministerial powers? When was it made? By whom? In what manner were the powers in question divided? The commission itself gives no hint of such a division. No subsequent passage of scripture suggests any thing of the kind. Nothing that so much as seems to warrant such a supposition, is to be found in all the book of God. Nay, the contrary most manifestly appears. For when, after our Lord's ascension, we find the apostle *Paul*, and other inspired writers, giving instructions concerning the ministerial office and duties, they always speak in the spirit of the original commission; and represent *teaching* men the way of salvation, *edifying* the Church, and administering the *seals* of the covenant, as the highest functions belonging to this office. These are ever the principal objects to which their precepts and exhortations are directed, and which they evidently regard as paramount to all questions of precedence and privilege.

Until, then, the friends of three orders in the Christian ministry produce, from Scripture, some other commission than that which we have seen; or find some explicit warrant for a threefold

division of the powers which this one commission conveys, we are compelled to conclude, that our Lord contemplated but one standing order of Gospel ministers in his Church ; and that all who are empowered to preach his Word, and administer his sacraments, belong to this order.

II. That *Bishops* are not, by divine right, different from, or superior to, *Presbyters*, is further evident, because the terms *Bishop* and *Presbyter* are uniformly used in the New Testament, as convertible titles for the same office.

The Greek word (ἐπισκοπος) which we translate *Bishop*, literally signifies an *Overseer*. This word appears to have been adopted by the apostles from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (generally called the *Septuagint*) which was in common use among the Christians of that day. In this celebrated version, the word is employed frequently, and to designate officers of various grades and characters, civil, military, and ecclesiastical. The inspired writers of the New Testament, observing that this word, as a title of office, was much in use, and familiarly understood among those who had the scriptures in the popular language in their hands, thought proper to adopt and apply it to the officers of Christ's spiritual kingdom.

The word (πρεσβυτερος) which the translators of the New Testament render *Elder*, and which precisely answers to the word *Presbyter*, literally signifies an *aged person*. But as among the Jews, and the eastern nations generally, persons advanced in age were commonly selected to fill stations of dignity and authority, the word *Presbyter*, or *Elder*, became, in process of time, an established title of office. The Jews had rulers called by this name, not only over their nation, but also over every city, and every synagogue. To a Jew, therefore, no term could be addressed more perfectly intelligible and familiar. The apostles finding this to be the case with most of those among whom they ministered, gave the name of *Elder* to the pastors and rulers of the Churches which they organized ; and the rather because these pastors were generally in fact taken from among the more grave and aged converts to the Christian faith.

From this statement it will appear, that *Presbyter*, if we attend to its original meaning, is a word of more honourable import than *Bishop*. *Presbyter* is expressive of *authority*, *Bishop* of *duty*.

The former implies the *dignity* and *power* of a ruler ; the latter conveys the idea of *work*, or of executing a prescribed *task*. But whatever may be the comparative degrees of honour expressed by these terms, it is certain that they are uniformly employed, in the New Testament, as convertible titles for the same office. An attentive consideration of the following passages will establish this position beyond all doubt.

The first which I shall quote is found in Acts xx. 17. 28. *And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the Elders (or Presbyters, πρεσβυτερος) of the Church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (or Bishops, επισκοπους) to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.*—In this passage it is evident, that the same persons who, in the 17th verse are styled *Elders* or *Presbyters*, are in the 28th called *Bishops*. This, indeed, is so incontestible, that the most zealous Episcopalian, so far as I know, has never called it in question. It is further observable, that in the city of *Ephesus* there were *a number* of Bishops, who governed the Church in that city as co-ordinate rulers, or in common council. This is wholly irreconcilable with the principles of modern episcopacy ; but perfectly coincides with the Presbyterian doctrine, that scriptural Bishops are the Pastors of single congregations.\*

\* It has been much controverted whether, in each of the larger cities, in which Christianity was first planted, such as *Jerusalem*, *Ephesus*, *Antioch*, *Corinth*, &c. there was more than one congregation of Christians. In other words, whether by the *Church at Ephesus* we are to understand, a single congregation, or several separate societies, as the *Presbyterian Church in New-York* comprehends several congregations?—From the *multitudes* that are said to have believed in those cities, it is probable there were several thousands of Christians in each of them; and as the places in which they assembled for public worship were small, perhaps most of them apartments in private dwellings, we cannot suppose that they were all able to assemble at the same time and place. The expedient, therefore, of dividing themselves into small associations, would seem natural, and even unavoidable. We know that in the days of the apostles there were a number of *Bishops* in each of the cities of *Ephesus* and *Philippi*. It is most probable that these were pastors of so many different congregations. We are by no means to suppose,

The next passage to our purpose is the address of the apostle *Paul* to the *Philippians*, in the introduction of his Epistle to that Church. *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons.* Here, as well, as in the case of *Ephesus*, just mentioned, we find the inspired writer speaking of *a number of Bishops* in a single city. It is true, *Dr. Hammond*, an eminent Episcopal writer, to avoid the force of this fact, so unfriendly to modern Episcopacy, would persuade us that *Philippi* was a Metropolitan city, and that the *Bishops* here spoken of, did not all belong to that city, but also included those of the neighbouring cities, under that Metropolis. But this supposition is not in the least degree countenanced by the apostle's language; the plain, unsophisticated meaning of which evidently refers us to the Bishops and Deacons which were at *Philippi*, and there only. Besides, *Dr. Whitby*, a later, and equally eminent Episcopal divine, assures us, that *Philippi* was not, at that time, a Metropolitan city, but under *Thessalonica*, which was the Metropolis of all *Macedonia*. *Dr. Stillingfleet* has also clearly shown, that there are no traces to be found within the first six centuries, of the Church at *Philippi* being a Metropolitan Church. *Dr. Maurice*, another zealous and able writer in favour of diocesan episcopacy goes further. He acknowledges that *Dr. Hammond* stands alone, in the solution of the difficulty above mentioned; that he cannot undertake to defend it; and that "he could never find sufficient reason to believe these *Bishops* any other than *Presbyters*, as the generality of the Fathers, and of the Church of England have done."\*

The third passage to be adduced is in *Titus* i. It is as follows. *For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders, (Presbyters) in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the*

however, that in those days of persécution and peril, when Christians were almost afraid of appearing in public, and when their meetings were often held under the cover of midnight, that their division into *parishes*, or even into *congregations*, was as regular and as precisely defined as at present; or that the same principles of reasoning in all cases apply to those small *house-churches*, as to modern congregations.

\* Defence of Diocesan Episcopacy, p. 29.

*husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a Bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, &c.* Here the apostle, in directing Titus to ordain Elders, enjoins upon him to choose those officers from among the most temperate, blameless, and faithful believers; and the reason he assigns for this injunction is, that a *Bishop must be blameless*; evidently meaning, that *Presbyter* and *Bishop* are the same office. On any other construction, the different parts of the address are unconnected, and the whole destitute of force. But these are charges which no man who is conversant with the writings of *Paul*, would ever think of bringing against them.

This passage also establishes another point. It not only shows that the *Elders* here to be ordained, were considered and denominated *Bishops*, thereby proving the identity of the office designated by these names; but it likewise proves, beyond controversy, that, in apostolic times, it was *customary* to have a *plurality* of these *Bishops* in a single city. We have before seen that there were a *number* of *Bishops* in the city of *Ephesus*, and a *number* more in the city of *Philippi*: but in the passage before us we find *Titus* directed to ordain a plurality of them in *every* city. This perfectly agrees with the Presbyterian doctrine, that scriptural *Bishops* were the pastors of single congregations, or *Presbyters*, invested, either separately or conjointly, as the case might be, with pastoral charges; but it is impossible to reconcile it with the modern notions of diocesan episcopacy.

There is one more passage, equally conclusive in this argument. It is that which is found in 1 *Peter* v. 1, 2. *The Elders (or Presbyters) which are among you, I exhort, who am also an Elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof* (ἐπισκοποῦντες, that is, exercising the office, or performing the duties of *Bishops* over them), *not by restraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.* The construction of this passage is obvious. It expressly represents *Presbyters* as *Bishops* of the flock, and solemnly exhorts them to exercise the powers, and perform the duties of this office.

In short, the title of *Bishop*, as applied to ministers of the Gospel,



occurs only *four* times in the New Testament: in *three* of these cases, there is complete proof that it is given to those who are styled *Presbyters*; and in the *fourth* case, there is strong presumption that it is applied in the same manner. On the other hand, the Apostle *Peter*, as we have just seen, in addressing an authoritative exhortation to other ministers, calls himself a *Presbyter*. The same is done by the Apostle *John*, in the beginning of his second and third epistles—*The Elder (Presbyter) unto the well beloved Gaius*—*The Elder unto the Elect Lady, &c.* Could more complete evidence be desired, that both these titles belonged equally, in the days of the apostles, to the same office?

But it is not necessary further to pursue the proof that these names are indiscriminately applied in scripture to the same office. This is freely and unanimously acknowledged by the most respectable Episcopal writers. In proof of this acknowledgment, it were easy to multiply quotations. A single authority shall suffice. Dr. *Whitby* confesses, that “both the Greek and Latin Fathers do, with one consent, declare, that *Bishops* were called *Presbyters*, and *Presbyters* *Bishops*, in apostolic times, the names being then common.” *Notes on Philip*. i. 1.

I know that many advocates for diocesan episcopacy have affected to make light of the argument, in favour of the parity of of ministers, drawn from the indiscriminate application of these scriptural names. Indeed, some of them have attempted, by florid declamation and ludicrous comparisons, to turn the whole into ridicule. This is an extremely convenient method of evading the force of an argument which cannot be fairly answered. But to evade an argument is not to refute it. Besides, have those who reject all reasoning drawn from the application of scriptural names, considered whither this principle will lead them? Have they reflected how large a portion of those weapons with which they defend the Divine character, and the vicarious sacrifice of the blessed Redeemer, against the attacks of Socinians, and other heretics, are necessarily surrendered, if the *names* and *titles* of scripture are so vague and indecisive as they would, in this case, represent them? Will they venture to charge the great Head of the Church, who dictated the scriptures, with addressing his people in a language altogether indistinct, and calculated to mislead them; and that too on a subject which, they tell us, lies at the foundation

not merely of the *welfare*, but of the very *existence* of the Church? Surely these consequences cannot have been considered. The argument, then, drawn from the indiscriminate application of the names *Bishop* and *Presbyter* to the same persons, is conclusive. It was pronounced to be so, by the venerable and learned *Jerome*, more than 1400 years ago; and his judgment has been adopted and supported by some of the greatest and best divines that have adorned the Christian Church, from that period down to the present day.

But we have something more to produce in support of our system, than the indiscriminate application of the *names* in question to one order of ministers. We can show,

III. That the same *character*, *duties*, and *powers*, which are ascribed in the sacred writings to *Bishops*, are also ascribed to *Presbyters*; thereby plainly establishing their identity of *order* as well as of *name*.

Had *Bishops* been constituted, by the great Head of the Church, an order of ministers different from *Presbyters*, and superior to them, we might confidently expect to find a different commission given; different qualifications required; and a different sphere of duty assigned. But nothing of all this appears. On the contrary, the inspired writers, when they speak of ministers of the Gospel, by which ever of these names they are distinguished, give the same description of their character; represent the same gifts and graces as necessary for them; enjoin upon them the same duties; and, in a word, exhibit them as called to the same work, and as bearing the same office. To prove this, let us attend to some of the principal powers vested in Christian ministers, and see whether the scriptures do not ascribe them equally to *Presbyters* and *Bishops*.

1. That *Presbyters* had, in apostolic times, as they now have, authority to *preach the word*, and *administer sacraments*, is universally allowed by Episcopalians themselves. Now, if we consult either the original commission, or subsequent instructions given ministers, in various parts of the New Testament, we shall find these constantly represented as the highest acts of ministerial authority; as the grand powers in which all others are included. Instead of finding in the sacred volume the smallest hint, that *ordaining* ministers, and *governing* the Church, were functions of



an *higher* order than dispensing the word of eternal life and the seals of the everlasting covenant; the reverse is plainly and repeatedly taught. The latter, we have already seen, are the most prominent objects in the original commission; they formed the principal business of the apostles wherever they went; and all the authority with which they were vested is represented as being subservient to the promulgation of that *Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*. *Preaching and administering sacraments*, therefore, are the highest acts of ministerial authority; they are far above ordination and government, as the *end* is more excellent than the *means*; as the *substance* is more important than the *form*.

If, then, *Presbyters* be authorized, as all acknowledge, to perform these functions, we infer that they are the highest order of Gospel ministers. Those who are empowered to execute the most dignified and the most useful duties pertaining to the ministerial office, can have no superiors in that office. The Episcopal system, then, by depressing the *teacher*, for the sake of elevating the *ruler*, inverts the sacred order, and departs both from the letter and the spirit of Scripture. The language of Scripture is, *Let the Presbyters who rule well be counted worthy of double honour*, ESPECIALLY THEY WHO LABOUR IN THE WORD AND DOCTRINE. But the language of modern episcopacy is, that labouring in the word and doctrine is a lower service in the Church, and government a more exalted: that *bearing rule* is more honourable and more important than to *edify*—a language which to be refuted needs only to be stated.

From these premises I am compelled to conclude, that the officer of the Christian Church who is authorized to preach and administer sacraments, cannot be an inferior or subordinate officer, but must be equal to, or rather the same with, the scriptural Bishop. And in this reasoning I am supported by the judgment of Bishop *Burnet*, who declares—"Since I look upon the sacramental actions, as the highest of sacred performances, I cannot but acknowledge those who are empowered for them, must be of the highest office in the Church."\*

2. The power of *government*, or of *ruling* the Church, is also

\* Vindication of the Church and State of Scotland, p. 336.

committed to *Presbyters*. This is denied by Episcopalians; but the Scriptures, expressly affirm it. The true meaning of the word *Presbyter*, in its official application, is a *church ruler or governor*, as Episcopalians themselves allow. Hence the “oversight” or government of the Church is in Scripture expressly assigned to *Presbyters* as their proper duty. The *Elders* to whom the Apostle *Peter* directed his first epistle, certainly had this power. To them it is said, *The Elders which are among you I exhort. Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but as ensamples to the flock.* Scarcely any words could express more distinctly than these the power of ruling in the Church. But, as if to place the matter beyond all doubt, these *Elders* are exhorted to use this power with moderation, and not to tyrannize, or “lord it over God’s heritage.” Why subjoin this caution, if they were not invested with a governing authority at all?

The case of the *Elders of Ephesus* is still more decisive.—When the Apostle *Paul* was about to take his final leave of them, he addressed them thus: *Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood, &c.* The word here translated *feed*, is ποιμαίνειν, which means taking such care as a *shepherd* does of his *flock*; and, of course, implies *watching over, guiding, and ruling*, as well as *feeding*. Here the government of this Church, then, as well as ministering in the word, is evidently vested in the *Elders*. No mention is made of any individual, who had the whole ruling power vested in him, or even a larger share of it than others. Had there been a *Bishop* in this Church, in the Episcopal sense of the word, that is a single person of superior order to these *Elders*, and to whom, of course, they were in subjection, it is strange that, in this whole account, we do not once find the most distant allusion to him.\* When the Apostle was telling the *Elders* that they should *never see his face more*, and that dissen-

\* The reader will bear in mind, that the zealous advocates for Episcopacy suppose and assert that *Timothy* was Bishop of *Ephesus* at this time. On what grounds this assertion is made will be seen in the next letter.

sions and difficulties were about to arise in their Church, could there have been a more fit occasion to address their superior, had there been such a man present? To whom could instruction have been so properly directed, in this crisis, as to the Chief Shepherd? On the other hand, supposing such a superior to have existed, and to have been prevented by sickness, or any other means, from attending at this conference, why did not the Apostle remind the *Elders* of their duty to him? Why did he not exhort them, in the strife and divisions which he foretold as approaching, to cleave to their *Bishop*, and submit to him, as the best means of unity and peace? And, finally, supposing their *Bishop* to have been dead, and the office vacant, why did not the Apostle, when about to take leave of a flock so much endeared to him, select a Bishop for them, ordain him with his own hands, and commit the Church to his care? But not a word of all this appears. No hint is given of the existence of such a superior. On the contrary, the Apostle declares to these *Elders*, that the Holy Ghost had made them *Bishops* over the Church at *Ephesus*; he exhorts them to *rule* that Church; and when about to depart, never to see them more, he leaves them in possession of this high trust.

But the passage just quoted from 1 *Tim.* v. is absolutely conclusive on this point. *Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine.* Here the power of government in the Church is ascribed to *Presbyters* in terms which cannot be rendered more plain and decisive. Here, also, we find officers of the Church who are not recognized in the Episcopal system, but who are always found in the Presbyterian Church, viz. *ruling Elders*, or those who are appointed to assist in governing the Church, but who do not preach or administer sacraments. But this is not all: *bearing rule* in the Church is unequivocally represented in this passage as a less honourable employment than preaching, or *labouring in the word and doctrine*. The mere *ruling Elder*, who performs his duty well, is declared to be worthy of "double honour;" but the Elder who, to this function, adds the more dignified and important one of preaching the Gospel of salvation, is declared to be entitled to honour of a *still higher* kind.

As this passage is directly hostile to the claims of modern Episcopacy, great exertions have been made to set aside its

testimony. To effect this the most unnatural glosses have been adopted. Instead of formally stating and answering these, I will content myself with delivering the opinions of three distinguished divines, whose judgment on such a subject will be despised by none. Dr. *Owen* declares—"This would be a text of uncontrollable evidence, if it had any thing but prejudice and interest to contend with. On the first proposal of this text—*That the Elders who rule well are worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine*, a rational man, who is unprejudiced, who never heard of the controversy about ruling Elders, can hardly avoid an apprehension that there are two sorts of Elders, some that labour in the word and doctrine, and some who do not do so. The truth is, it was interest and prejudice that first caused some learned men to strain their wits to find out evasions from the evidence of this testimony; being so found, some others, of meaner abilities, have been entangled by them." The language of Dr. *Whitaker*, a zealous and learned Episcopalian, is equally strong and decided, with regard to this passage. "By these words," says he, "the Apostle evidently distinguishes between the Bishops and the inspectors of the Church. If all who rule well be worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine, it is plain there were some who did not so labour; for if all had been of this description, the meaning would have been absurd; but the word *especially* points out a difference. If I should say, that all who study well at the university are worthy of double honour, *especially they who labour in the study of theology*, I must either mean that *all* do not apply themselves to *the study of theology*, or I should speak nonsense. Wherefore I confess that to be the most genuine sense by which pastors and teachers are distinguished from those who only govern."—*Prælect. ap. Didioclav. p. 681*. Equally to our purpose is the opinion of that acute and learned Episcopalian Dr. *Whitby*, in his Note on this passage. "The Elders of the Jews," says he, "were of two sorts; 1st. Such as governed in the Synagogue; and 2dly. Such as ministered in *reading* and *expounding* their Scriptures, &c. And these the Apostle here declares to be the most honourable, and worthy of the chiefest reward. Accordingly, the Apostle, reckoning up the offices God

“ had appointed in the Church, places *teachers* before *governments*.  
 “ 1 Corin. xii. 28.”

3. The Scriptures also represent *Presbyters* as empowered to *ordain*, and as actually exercising this power. Of this we can produce at least three instances of the most decisive kind.

The first is recorded in *Acts* xiii. as follows. *Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon, that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.* This is the most ample account of an ordination to be found in Scripture; and it is an account which, were there no other, would be sufficient to decide the present controversy in our favour. Who were the ordainers on this occasion? They were not *Apostles*. Lest this should be supposed, their names are given. They were not *Bishops*, in the modern sense of the word; for there were a *number* of them ministering together in the same Church. They were the *Prophets* and *Teachers* of the Church at *Antioch*. With respect to these *Teachers*, no higher character has ever been claimed for them than that of *Presbyters*, *labouring in the word and doctrine*. And as to the *Prophets*, though the precise nature of their endowments and office be not certainly known; yet there is complete evidence that they did not sustain that particular ecclesiastical rank, with which Episcopalians contend that, in the days of the Apostles, the power of *ordaining* was connected. Still these ministers *ordained*; and they did this under the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost, who cannot be supposed to have sanctioned any departure from an essential principle of Church government.

To invalidate this reasoning, some Episcopal writers have suggested that the ordination here recorded was performed not by the *Teachers*, but by the *Prophets* only. But nothing like this appears in the sacred text. On the contrary, its plain and simple import forbids such a construction. The command to ordain *Paul* and *Barnabas* was directed both to the *Prophets* and *Teachers*; and we are told that *they* proceeded immediately to the performance

of the solemn act to which they were called. To suppose, therefore, that the *Teachers* either did not engage in this ordination ; or that, if they did participate in the transaction, it was rather as *witnesses* expressing consent, than as *ordainers* conveying authority, or ratifying a commission, is a supposition as illegitimate in reasoning, as it is repugnant to the sacred narrative.

Another plea urged against this example is, that it is not to be considered as an *ordination* at all ; that both *Paul* and *Barnabas* had been recongnized as ministers of the Gospel several years before this event ; and that it is rather to be regarded as a solemn *benediction*, previous to their entering on a particular mission among the Gentiles. It is readily granted that *Paul* and *Barnabas* had been engaged in preaching the Gospel long before this time. But there is no evidence that either of them had ever before been set apart by human ordainers. It seemed good, therefore, to the Holy Ghost, that before they entered on their grand mission to the Gentiles, they should receive that kind of ordination, which was intended to be perpetual in the Church. No example of such an ordination had yet been given. If the practice were ever to be established, it was necessary that a beginning should be made. And as these missionaries were about to travel among a people, who were not familiar with the rite of ordination by the imposition of hands, so well understood by the Jews, it was judged proper by infinite Wisdom to set this example for imitation in all subsequent periods. And as if to give the strongest practical declaration of ministerial parity, *Paul*, with all the elevation of his gifts, and all the lustre of his apostolic character, submitted to be ordained, together with his brother *Barnabas*, agreeably to the regular principles of Church order, by the prophets and teachers of the Church of *Antioch*.

It may further be observed, that if this be not an ordination, it will be difficult to say what constitutes one. Here were fasting prayer, the imposition of hands, and every circumstance attending a formal investiture with the ministerial office, as particularly stated as in any instance on record. And, accordingly, Dr. *Hammond*, one of the most able and zealous advocates for Episcopacy, does not scruple to pronounce it a regular ordination ; though for the sake of maintaining his system, he falls into the absurdity of supposing, without a shadow of proof from any source,



that *Simeon*, *Lusius* and *Manaen*, were diocesan Bishops; a supposition wholly irreconcilable with the diocesan scheme, since they were all *ministering in the Church at Antioch*. Bishop *Taylor*, another eminent Episcopal writer, considers this transaction as a regular ordination; for speaking of *Paul*, he says—"He had the special honour to be chosen in an extraordinary way; yet he had something of the ordinary too; for, in an extraordinary manner he was sent to be ordained in an ordinary ministry. His designation was as immediate as that of the eleven apostles, though his ordination was not." This also was the judgment of the learned Dr. *Lightfoot*. "No better reason," says he, "can be given of this present action, than that the Lord did hereby set down a platform of ordaining ministers to the Church of the Gentiles in future times." And, finally, *Chrysostom*, one of the early Fathers, delivers the same opinion. He asserts that "*Paul* was ordained at *Antioch*," and quotes this passage from the *Acts* of the Apostles in support of his assertion.

But, after all, it does not destroy the argument, even if we concede that the case before us was not a regular ordination. It was certainly a solemn *separation to the work to which the Holy Ghost had called them*. This is the language of the inspired writer, and cannot be controverted. Now, it is a principle which pervades the scriptures, that an inferior is never called formally to pronounce benediction on an official superior. Did any man ever hear, in a church organized upon prelatical principles of *Presbyters* undertaking, on any occasion, to set apart a *Bishop*, or a group of Bishops, to a particular service, by solemn prayer and the imposition of hands? On this principle alone, then, whether it relates to a regular ordination or not, the narrative before us appears utterly to subvert prelacy.

The next instance of an ordination performed by *Presbyters*, is that of *Timothy*, which is spoken of by the Apostle *Paul*, in the following terms. 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. *Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*. All agree that the Apostle is here speaking of *Timothy's* ordination; and this ordination is expressly said to have been performed with *the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*—that is, of the *Eldership*, or a council of *Presbyters*.

To this instance of Presbyterian ordination it is objected, by some Episcopal writers, that although a council of *presbyters* ap-



pear, from this passage, to have laid their hands on *Timothy* upon this occasion, yet the ordination was actually performed by the Apostle alone, who elsewhere addresses *Timothy* in this language: *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.* 2 *Tim.* i. 6. They contend that, as *Paul* speaks of the ordination as being performed *by* the putting on of *his* hands, and *with* the laying on of the hands of the *Presbytery*, we are to infer that the power was conveyed by him only, and that the *Presbyters* only imposed their hands by way of *concurrence*, and to express their *approbation*.

But the Apostle, in speaking of a gift conveyed to *Timothy* by the putting on of *his* hands, either refers to the ordination of that young minister, or he does not. Some have supposed that he does not refer to that transaction at all, but to an occasion and a solemnity altogether different, when, by the imposition of his hands alone, he communicated to *Timothy* the *extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost*, to impart which, by the laying on of hands, belonged, as is generally supposed, exclusively to the Apostles. If this supposition be admitted, and some of the greatest divines that ever lived have adopted it, then the objection before us totally falls to the ground, and it follows, that the *presbyters* alone were the ordainers in this instance. If, on the other hand, we suppose that the Apostle, in both passages, is speaking of the ordination of *Timothy*, and that he and the *Presbytery* both participated in the transaction, the supposition will be equally fatal to the Episcopal cause. For let it be remembered, that all Episcopalians, in this controversy, take for granted, that *Timothy* was, at this time, ordained a *Diocesan Bishop*. But if this were so, how came *presbyters* to lay their hands on him at his ordination? We know that *presbyters* in the Episcopal Church, are in the habit of laying on their hands, with those of the *Bishop*, in ordaining *presbyters*; but was it ever heard of, in the Christian Church, after the distinction between *Bishops* and *presbyters* arose, that those who admitted this distinction suffered *presbyters* to join with *Bishops*, by imposing hands in the consecration of a *Bishop*? No; on Episcopal principles, this would be an irregularity of the most absurd and inadmissible kind. To this our opponents reply, that the *Presbyters* in this case joined with the Apostle in the imposition of hands, not

as *ordainers*, but merely to express their *concurrence* and *approbation*. But do *Presbyters*, even in this sense, unite in imposing hands in the consecration of a *diocesan Bishop*? Or were they ever known to do so in Episcopal Churches? Besides, after all, the whole idea of some laying on their hands in ordination, not as ordainers, but merely to express their *approbation*, is a conceit without any foundation in scripture; contradicted by the earliest and best records of the primitive Church; and manifestly invented to evade the force of an irresistible argument. I challenge any one to produce me a single passage from the word of God, or from any Christian writer within the first three hundred years after Christ, which gives the least countenance to this fanciful supposition.

But it is still urged, that the mode of expression is different with respect to the imposition of the Apostle's hands, and those of the Presbytery; that *Timothy* is said to have received his gift *by* the former, and *with* the latter. And accordingly much ingenious criticism has been wasted on the prepositions *δια* and *μετα*, in order to show, that the former expresses *agency*, while the latter more commonly signifies mere *concurrence*: from which it has been inferred that *Paul* alone was the real ordainer, or, in other words, conveyed the ministerial authority by the imposition of his hands; while the Presbyters laid on their hands only as witnesses, and for the purpose of giving their countenance to the transaction. I forbear to apply to this criticism those epithets which it has always appeared to me to deserve; nor shall I detain you by attempting to expose the weakness of that cause whose advocates fly for succour to a quibble, founded on the doubtful interpretation of two Greek particles. It is enough for me to assure such of you, my brethren, as are not able to judge for yourselves in this matter, that the criticism and quibble in question are wholly unworthy of your regard; that these words both frequently signify *by* as well as *with*, and express *agency*, as well as *concurrence*;\* and that the

\* It is remarkable that the learned *Jerome*, more than 1400 years ago, adopted the Presbyterian construction of this passage. He thus translates 1 Tim. iv. 14. *Noli negligere gratiam quæ in te est, quæ tibi data est prophetia, per impositionem manuum Presbyterii*: and expressly adduces the passage to prove that *Bishops* and *Presbyters* are, by divine right, equal. The same construction of the passage has been adopted by the most learned and judicious commentators ever since.

objection founded on any supposed difference of meaning in their application to this case, has not received the countenance of some even of the most learned and respectable advocates for diocesan Episcopacy.

Some Episcopal writers, in order to avoid the difficulties above stated, have taken the liberty of supposing, that by the word *Presbytery* (πρεσβυτεριον) in this passage is to be understood, not a council of *Presbyters*, but the *College of the Apostles*. But this supposition is adopted without the least proof or probability. No instance has been, or can be produced, either from the New Testament, or from any early Christian writer, of the Apostles, as a collective body, being called a Presbytery. On the contrary, this word is always used, in scripture, in the writings of the primitive fathers, and particularly in the writings of *Ignatius*, (who is of the highest authority with our opponents in this dispute,) to signify a council of Presbyters, and never in any other sense. But, allowing the word *Presbytery* to have the meaning contended for, and that *Timothy* was ordained by the bench of Apostles, how came the modest and humble *Paul* to speak of the whole gift as conveyed by *his* hands, and not so much as to mention any other name? Were all the rest of the Apostles mere *concurring* spectators, and and not real ordainers, as before pleaded? Then it must follow, not only that *Paul* claimed a superiority over his brethren, which was never heard of before; but also that one *Bishop* is sufficient for the regular ordination of another *Bishop*, which is opposed to every principle of Episcopal government, as well as to the established canons, so far as I know, of every Church on earth.

Finally, it has been urged by some, against this instance of Presbyterian ordination, that the word here translated *Presbytery*, signifies the *office* conferred, and not the *body of ministers* who conferred it. Though this construction of the passage has been adopted by some respectable names,\* it is so absurd and unnatural,

\* Among those names, that of the great and venerable *Calvin* appears, who, when he wrote his *Institutes*, adopted this unnatural sense, and expressed himself in the following terms—"Quod de impositione manuum Presbyterii dicitur, non ita accipio quasi Paulus de seniorum collegio loquatur; sed hoc nomine ordinationem ipsam intelligo." *Instit. lib. iv. cap. 3. sect. 16.* Such an interpretation of a plain passage of scripture, even from so great a man, deserves little regard. But *Calvin*,

and so totally inconsistent with every rational principle of interpretation, that it scarcely deserves a serious refutation. Let us see how the text will read with this meaning attached to the word in question. *Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of thine office.* If this be not nonsense, it is difficult to say what deserves that name. But suppose we make a monstrous inversion of the whole passage as no rule of grammar will justify, and read it thus—*Neglect not the gift of the Presbyterate which is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands.* It will then follow, that the office conferred upon *Timothy* was the *Presbyterate*, or the office of *Presbyter*; but this, while it entirely coincides with the Presbyterian doctrine, will prove fatal to the Episcopal scheme, which constantly takes for granted that *Timothy* was not a mere *Presbyter*, but a *diocesan Bishop*.

The last instance that I shall mention of ordination performed by *Presbyters*, is that of *Paul* and *Barnabas*, who, after having been regularly set apart to the work of the ministry themselves, proceeded through the cities of *Lystra*, *Iconium*, &c. And when they had ordained them *Elders* in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed. Our adversaries will perhaps say, that *Paul* alone performed these ordinations in his apostolic or episcopal character; and that *Barnabas* only laid on hands to express his approbation of what *Paul* did. But the inspired writer, as usual, speaks a different language. He declares that *they*, both of them, ordained. Perhaps it will be said, that *Barnabas* was himself an *Apostle*, as he is so styled, *Acts* xiv. 14. and that he joined with *Paul* in ordaining *Presbyters*, in virtue of this superior character. We all know that he was not one of the *Apostles*, strictly so called, and, of course, that none of that pre-eminence which belonged to their character can be claimed for him. The word *Apostle* signifies

soon afterwards, when he came to write his Commentary, and when his judgment was more mature, gave a very different opinion. "*Presbyterium.*] *Qui hic collectivum nomen esse putant, pro collegio Presbyterorum positum, recte sentiunt meo iudicio.*" *Comment. in loc.* The truth is, the word *Presbyterium* is borrowed from the *Synagogue*, and was in familiar use to express the bench of *Elders* or *Presbyters*, ever found in the *Synagogue* system.

simply a *Messenger*, a person *sent*. It was in use among the Greeks, and also among the Jews, before the time of Christ. The Jewish Apostles were assistants to the High Priest in discussing questions of the law; and were sometimes employed in inferior and secular duties. *Barronii Annales*, An. 32. Accordingly, besides the twelve apostles appointed by Christ himself, there were, in the primitive Churches, apostles, or messengers, chosen either by the twelve, or by the Churches themselves, to go to distant places, on special services. In this vague and general sense, the word apostle is repeatedly used in Scripture. In this sense *Barnabas* and *Epaphroditus* are called Apostles. In this sense *John* the Baptist is called an apostle by *Tertullian*. And in the same sense this name is applied by early Christian writers to the seventy disciples, and to those who propagated the Gospel long after the apostolic age. From this name, then, as applied to *Barnabas*, no pre-eminence of character can be inferred.\* Besides, the supposition that he bore an ecclesiastical rank above that of *presbyter*, is effectually refuted by the fact that he was himself ordained by the *presbyters* of *Antioch*. As a *Presbyter*, therefore, he ordained others; and the only rational construction that can be given to the passage, renders it a plain precedent for Presbyterian ordination.

IV. A fourth source of direct proof in favour of the Presbyterian plan of Church Government, is found in the model of the *Jewish Synagogue*, and in the abundant evidence which the Scriptures afford, that the Christian Church was formed after the same model.

At *Jerusalem* alone, where the Temple stood, were sacrifices offered, and the Mosaic rites observed. But in almost every town and village in *Judea*, Synagogues were erected, like parish Churches of modern times, for prayer and praise, for reading and expounding the Scriptures. The *Temple* worship, as will be afterwards shown, was, throughout, typical and ceremonial, and of course was done away by the coming of Christ. But the *Synagogue* worship was

\* The translators of our Bible very clearly recognize this distinction between the *appropriate* and the *general* sense of the word *Apostle*. Thus in 2 Cor. viii. 23, they render the phrase *αποστολοι εκκλησιων*, the *messengers of the Churches*. And in Philip. ii. 25, they translate the word *αποστολος* as applied to *Epaphroditus*, *messenger*.



altogether of a different nature. It was that part of the organized religious establishment of the Old Testament Church, which, like the decalogue, was purely moral and spiritual, or at least chiefly so; and, therefore, in its leading characters, proper to be adopted under any dispensation. Accordingly we find that our Lord himself frequented the Synagogues, and taught in them; and that the apostles, and other Christian ministers in their time, did the same. It is well known, also, that in the city of *Jerusalem*, where the Gospel first began to be preached, after the resurrection of Christ, and where the New Testament Church was first organized, there were, if we may believe the best writers, several hundred Synagogues. It is equally certain that the first converts to Christianity were Jews; that they came into the Christian Church with all the feelings and habits of their former connexions, and mode of worship strongly prevalent; and that they gave the apostles much trouble by their prejudices in favour of old establishments, and against innovation. It was probable, therefore, beforehand, that, under these circumstances, the apostles, who went so far as to admit circumcision, in particular cases, for the sake of keeping peace with some of the first converts, would make as little change, in converting Synagogues into Christian Churches, as was consistent with the spirituality of the New dispensation. To retain the ceremonial worship of the Temple, they could not possibly consent. To join the Priests in offering up sacrifices, when the great Sacrifice had been already offered up *once for all*; to attend on the typical entrance of the High Priest, once a year, with the blood of the sacrifice, into the *Holy of Holies*, while they were, at the same time, teaching that all these things were done away, and that the great *High Priest of our profession* had finally entered into the holiest of all, even into heaven for us; would have been an inconsistency not to be admitted. But no such inconsistency could be charged against a general conformity to the Synagogue model. And, therefore, as might have been expected, we find that this conformity was actually adopted. This will appear abundantly evident to every impartial inquirer, by attending to the following considerations.

1. The words *Synagogue* and *Church* have the same signification. They both signify an *Assembly* or *Congregation* of people convened for the worship of God; and they both signify, at the



same time, the *place* in which the assembly is convened. This community of signification, indeed, is so remarkable, that in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for expressing an *Assembly*, is thirty-seven times rendered *Synagogue* (Συναγωγή) and seventy times translated *Church*, (Εκκλησία), the precise word employed in the New Testament to express a Christian assembly. In fact, in one instance, a Christian congregation is by an inspired writer denominated a *Synagogue*. The Apostle James says—*My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly, (in the original your Synagogue) a man with a gold ring, &c.* I am aware that this coincidence in the meaning of these words is not absolutely conclusive; but it is one among the numerous concurring facts which prove that our Lord and his Apostles adopted that language which was familiar to the Jews, and to all who were acquainted with their Scriptures; and especially to those who frequented the Synagogue service.

2. The *mode of worship* adopted in the Christian Church by the Apostles, was substantially the same with that which had been long practised in the Synagogue. In the Synagogue, as we learn from *Maimonides*, and others, divine service was begun by the solemn reading of a portion of Scripture, by a person appointed for that service; to this succeeded an exhortation or sermon, by the *Ruler* of the Synagogue, or *Bishop*, whose office will be hereafter noticed. The sermon being finished, solemn prayers were offered up, by the same ruler, at the end of which the people said, *Amen*. Now, if we examine the New Testament, and those writings of the primitive Fathers, whose authenticity has never been questioned, we shall find, not only a striking similarity, but almost a perfect coincidence, in the mode of conducting the worship of Christian assemblies. That the ministers of the Christian Church, in like manner, made a practice, in their religious assemblies, of reading the Scriptures, delivering discourses and offering up solemn prayer, at the close of which the people gave their assent, by saying, *Amen*, is expressly stated in Scripture. And when *Justin Martyr* gives an account of the Christian worship, in his day, it is in the following terms—“Upon the day called Sunday, all the “Christians, whether in town or country, assemble in the same “place, wherein the commentaries of the Apostles, and the writings

“ of the Prophets, are read, as long as the time will permit. Then  
 “ the reader sitting down, the President of the assembly stands up  
 “ and delivers a sermon instructing and exhorting to the imitation  
 “ of that which is comely. After this is ended, we all stand up to  
 “ prayers : prayers being ended, the bread, wine, and water, are  
 “ all brought forth ; then the President again praying and praising  
 “ according to his ability, the people testify their assent by saying,  
 “ *Amen.*” Here we see no material difference between the  
 Synagogue and Christian worship, excepting the introduction of  
 the *Lord's Supper* into the latter.

3. The *titles* given to the *officers* of the Synagogue were transferred to the officers of the Christian Church. In every Synagogue, as those who are most profoundly learned in Jewish Antiquities tell us, there were a *Bishop*, a bench of *Elders*, and *Deacons*. The first named of these officers was called indifferently, *Minister*, *Bishop*, *Pastor*, *Presbyter*, and *Angel of the Church*\*. The *presbyters* or *Elders* in each Synagogue, according to some writers, were three, and, according to others, more numerous. And the *Bishop* was called a *presbyter*, because he sat with the *presbyters* in council, and was associated with them in authority. It is remarkable that all these titles were adopted in the organization of the Christian Church, as will appear, on the slightest perusal of the New Testament. And it is still more remarkable that not only the same variety, but also precisely the same interchange of titles, in the case of the principal officer of the Synagogue, was retained by the Apostles in speaking of the Pastors of Christian congregations.

4. Not only the *titles* of officers, but also their *characters*, *duties*, and *powers*, in substance, were transferred from the Synagogue to the Christian Church. The *Bishop* or *pastor* who presided in each Synagogue, directed the reading of the Law ; expounded it when read ; offered up public prayers ; and, in short, took the lead in conducting the public service of the Synagogue. This description applies with remarkable exactness to the duties and powers of the Christian *Bishop*. The bench of *Elders* in the

\* *Maimonides*, the celebrated Jewish Rabbi, who lived in the 12th century, in his learned work, *De Sanhed.* cap. 4. describes the *Bishop* of the Synagogue, as “ the Presbyter who laboured in the word and doctrine.”

Synagogue had entrusted to them the general powers of government and discipline ; and in like manner, the *Elders* or *presbyters*, in the Christian Church are directed to *rule the flock*, and formal directions are given them, for maintaining the purity of faith and practice. The bench of *Elders*, in the Synagogue, appears to have been made up of two classes ; of those who both taught and ruled, and those who, *in fact*, whatever their authority might have been, were employed only in ruling. And accordingly, in the Christian Church, we read of Elders who *labour in the word and doctrine*, as well as *rule* ; and of other Elders who *rule only*. In the Synagogue the office of the *Deacons* was to collect and distribute alms to the poor. In conformity with which, the *Deacons* of the Christian Church are represented, in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, as appointed for the purpose of ministering to the poor, and serving tables.

5. Finally, the *mode of ordaining* officers in the Synagogue was transferred to the Christian Church. In the introduction of men to the ceremonial *priesthood* of the Jews, or into the offices pertaining to the *Temple* service, there was no such thing, strictly speaking, as ordination. Both the Priests and Levites came to their respective offices by *inheritance*, and were *inducted* or *installed*, simply by being brought before the *Sanhedrim*, and receiving the approbation of that body. But, in the Synagogue service, the officers were solemnly elected, and ordained *by the imposition of hands*. Every *presbyter*, who had himself been regularly ordained, was authorized to act in the ordination of other *Presbyters* : and to make a valid ordination in the Synagogue, it was necessary that *three* ordainers should be present, and take part in the transaction. In like manner, we learn from the New Testament, that in Apostolic times, as well as ever since, the ministers of the Christian Church were ordained by the *imposition of hands* ; that Presbyters, as well as the Apostles themselves, were empowered to ordain ; and that in the first ordination of ministers of the Gospel recorded by the inspired writers, there were always a *plurality* of ordainers present, and engaged in the solemnity.

Thus I have given you a very brief sketch of the evidence that Christian Churches were organized by the Apostles, after the model of the Jewish Synagogues. I have shown that the *mode of worship* adopted in the Church, the *titles of her officers*, their

*powers, duties, and mode of ordination*, were all copied from the Synagogue. This evidence might be pursued much further, did the limits which I have prescribed to myself admit of details. It might easily be shown, that in all those respects in which the service of the Synagogue differed from that of the Temple, the Christian Church followed the former. The Temple service was confined to *Jerusalem*; the Synagogue worship might exist, and did exist wherever there was a sufficient number of Jews to form a congregation. The temple service was restricted with regard to the *vestments* of its officers; while in the Synagogue there was little or no regulation on this subject. And, finally, it is remarkable, that the mode in which the *Bishop* and *Elders* of each Synagogue were *seated* during the public service, was exactly copied into the Christian assemblies. With regard to these and many other particulars which might be mentioned, the Christian Churches in primitive times, it is well known, departed from the ceremonial splendour of the Temple, and followed the simplicity of the Synagogue. In fact, there is ample proof, that the similarity between the primitive Christian Churches, and the Jewish Synagogues was so great, that they were often considered and represented by the persecuting Pagans as the same.

In support of the foregoing statements, it would be easy to produce authorities of the highest character. The general fact, that the Christian church was organized by the inspired apostles, not on the plan of the Temple service, but after the Synagogue model, is amply shown, by the celebrated *John Selden*, in his work, *De Synedriis*; by Dr. *Lightfoot*, a learned Episcopal divine, in his *Horæ Hebraicæ*; by the very learned *Grotius*, in several parts of his Commentary; by Dr. (afterwards Bishop) *Stillingfleet*, in his *Irenicum*; and, above all, by *Vitringa*, in his profound and able work, *De Synagoga Vetere*—to which the author has given this bold title—"Three books on the ancient Synagogue; in which it is *demonstrated*, that the form of government, and of the ministry in the Synagogue was transferred to the Christian Church." If there be any points concerning the history and polity of the Church, which may be considered as indubitably established, this, unquestionably, is among the number. Out of many more modern writers, who concur in the same testimony, I shall content myself with three, whose opinion no adequate judge will disregard.

The first is the celebrated *Augustus Neander*, Professor in the University of *Berlin*, and generally considered as, perhaps, more profoundly skilled in Ecclesiastical History, than any other man now living. He is, moreover, a minister of the Lutheran Church, and, of course, has no sectarian spirit to gratify in vindicating Presbyterianism. After showing at some length that the government of the primitive Church was not monarchical or lordly, but dictated throughout by a spirit of mutual love, counsel, and prayer, he goes on to express himself thus—"We may suppose that where any thing could be found in the way of Church forms which was consistent with this spirit, it would be willingly appropriated by the Christian community. Now there happened to be in the Jewish Synagogue a system of government of this nature, not *monarchical*, but rather *aristocratical*, (or a government of the most *venerable* and *excellent*. A council of Elders, ἐπὶ πρεσβυτεροι, who conducted all the affairs of that body. It seemed most natural that Christianity, developing itself from the Jewish religion, should take this form of government. This form must also have appeared natural and appropriate to the Roman citizens, since their nation had, from the earliest times, been, to some extent, under the control of a senate, composed of seniors or elders. When the Church was placed under a Council of *Elders*, they did not always happen to be the oldest in reference to years; but *age* here, was, as in the Latin *Senatus*, and the Greek *γερονσία* expressive of *worth* or *merit*. Besides the common name of these overseers of the Church, to wit, *πρεσβυτεροι*, there were many other names given, according the peculiar situation occupied by the individual, or rather his peculiar field of labour; as *ποιμενες*, shepherds, *ηγουμενοι*, leaders, *προεστωτες των ασελφων*, rulers of the brethren, and *επισκοποι*, overseers.\*

Of the same purport, is the judgment of the celebrated German Commentator, Professor *Kuinoel*, of *Leipsic*, as exhibited in his Commentary on the 20th chapter, and 28th verse, of the Acts of Apostles. After showing conclusively that the very same persons, who in the New Testament are called *Bishops*, and *Shepherds*, are also called *presbyters*, which he says, "some have rashly denied, dreaming of a difference between Bishops and Presbyters

\* Kirchengeschichte, p. 283—285.



“in the primitive Church ;” he goes on to say, that the Christians in the time of the Apostles, established in the Church a form of government and discipline *similar to what prevailed in the Jewish Synagogue*. It was the duty, he says, of the rulers of the Synagogue to preserve discipline, superintend the external concerns of the respective societies over which they were placed, and also to teach and explain the law. In the same manner it was the duty of the bishops or presbyters to superintend the government of the Church, and to teach the doctrines of the Christian religion. They were both governors and teachers. The rulers of the Synagogues were confined to particular societies, and so were the first bishops or presbyters. No one had any control, except in the single society over which he had been appointed.

*Rosenmuller*, a far famed critic and commentator, also of *Germany*, delivers, with great confidence, a similar opinion, with respect to the conformity of the order of the primitive church to the model of the Synagogue. And asserts, with equal confidence, that presbyters and bishops, in the time of the apostles, were the same ; but that afterwards, bestowing the title of *bishop* upon one, by way of eminence, was brought in *by the custom of the Church*.\*

Unless I deceive myself, I have now established the four positions which were stated at the beginning of this letter, viz. That the scriptures contain but one commission for the Gospel ministry, and that there is no evidence of the powers conveyed by this commission being afterwards divided between different orders of ministers :—That the words *bishop* and *presbyter* are uniformly used in the New Testament as convertible titles for the same office :—that the same *character* and *powers* are also, in the sacred writings, ascribed interchangeably to *Bishops* and *presbyters*, thus plainly establishing their identity of *order* as well as of *name* :—And that the Christian Church was organized by the Apostles, after the model of the Jewish Synagogue, which was undeniably Presbyterian in its form.†

These positions, thus established, decide the controversy. Such

\* *D. J. G. Rosenmulleri, Scholia N. T. in Acta Apostol.* vi. 3., xi. 30. xiii. 1. xx. 17. 28.—In *Epist. 1 ad Tim.* v. 17.

† See the subject of the *Jewish Synagogue* further treated in Letter III. of the *second series*, included in this volume.



a concurrence of *language* and of *facts* in support of the doctrine of ministerial parity, is at once remarkable and conclusive. I mean conclusive as to the simple fact, that this was the system adopted in the Apostle's days. With respect to the question, how far the apostolic model of Church order is unalterably binding in all ages, in all nations, and under all states of society, it is wholly a different inquiry. On this point men equally pious and learned have entertained different opinions. My own opinion on the subject has been expressed in a former letter. But I see not how any one can peruse the New Testament, with an impartial mind, without perceiving that the Presbyterian form of Church government is there distinctly portrayed. This is the "truly primitive and apostolic form." And the more closely we adhere to this form, the more we testify our respect for that system which was framed by inspired men, sanctioned by miraculous powers, and made pre-eminently instrumental, in the midst of a frowning and hostile world, in building up the Church in holiness, through faith, unto salvation.

## LETTER III.

THE ARGUMENTS DRAWN FROM SCRIPTURE IN FAVOUR OF DIOCESAN  
EPISCOPACY, STATED AND EXAMINED.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

You have seen what the Scriptures declare in support of our doctrine of the Christian Ministry. I might safely rest the cause on this testimony. But as it is my wish to do full justice to our opponents, and not to overlook or suppress a single plea urged by them, which has the most distant appearance of plausibility, I will now proceed, with all the candour I can exercise, to examine the principal arguments in favour of their system, which they suppose are to be found in the word of God.

In examining these arguments, I must again request you to keep steadily in view the doctrine for which our Episcopal brethren contend, and the nature of that proof which it is incumbent on them to adduce. They appeal to Scripture to prove that Bishops are an order of Clergy superior to Presbyters; that their superiority rests on the appointment of Christ; and that with this superior order alone, are deposited all the treasures of ministerial authority and succession. To support such a claim, we demand *express warrant*. We require those who make the appeal, to produce passages of Scripture which contain direct *precept*, plain undoubted *example*, or at least some established *principle*, from which their conclusion necessarily flows. On a subject so *fundamental* as they represent this to be, we cannot be contented with gratuitous assumptions, or ingenious analogies, which have nothing to support them but human authority. We must have a warrant, decided and clear; a warrant which would be indubitable and satisfactory, if all books, excepting the Bible, were banished from the Church. Let us see whether our claimants are prepared with testimony of this kind.

I. The first argument urged by the friends of prelacy is, "That, as the mosaic economy was intended to prefigure the Gospel

“dispensation, we may reasonably suppose the Christian ministry “to be modelled after the *Jewish Priesthood* ; and that, as “there were, in the Temple service, an *High Priest, Priests*, and “*Levites*, so we may consider it as agreeable to the will of Christ, “that there should be the corresponding orders of *Bishops, Priests*, “and *Deacons*, in the New Testament Church.”

After the ample proof adduced in the foregoing Letter, that the Christian Church was organized by the Apostles, not after the model of the *Temple*, but of the *Synagogue* service, I might with propriety dismiss this argument, as sufficiently refuted by the establishment of that fact. But as much stress has been laid upon the argument in question, and as some cautious inquirers may wish to see it further discussed, let us proceed to a more particular examination of its merits.

You will observe the form of this argument. It may “reasonably be supposed” that such a correspondence of orders should exist. But why “suppose” it ? Does the Word of God, the great Charter of the Christian Church, say that this is the case ? Is there a single passage to be found in the sacred volume, which asserts, or gives the least hint, that such a likeness or analogy either *does*, or *ought* to exist ? I will venture to say, there is not. I have met, indeed, with much animated declamation in favour of this analogy, urging it as a “supposable” thing—as a “reasonable” thing, &c. &c. but I have never yet heard of a single passage of scripture, which is even pretended to teach the doctrine in question. For the general position, that many of the Old Testament institutions had a reference to, and were intended to prefigure New Testament blessings, it will be instantly seen by every discerning reader, is nothing to the purpose.

But this is not all. There is not only nothing to be found in Scripture which bears the least appearance of support to this argument ; but there is much to be found which contradicts and destroys it. It is impossible to read the New Testament without perceiving, that the Jewish Priesthood was a typical and temporary institution, which had both its accomplishment and its termination in Christ. This is taught in passages too numerous to be quoted ; but, more particularly, at great length, and with irresistible force of argument, in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*,\* in which the sacred

\* See especially the vii. viii. ix. and x. chapters.

writer declares, that since Christ the substance is come, the types which prefigured him are done away ; that the Levitical priesthood was chiefly employed in offering sacrifices, and attending on other ceremonial observances of the typical economy, for which there is no place since the great Sacrifice was *offered up once for all*; and that Christ Jesus himself is now *the great High Priest of our profession*. Is it not above measure wonderful, that any who have the Bible in their hands, and profess to make it the rule of their faith, should, in the face of language so explicit and decisive, represent any human officer in the Christian Church as standing in the place of the High Priest under the ceremonial dispensation ?

But it will be asked, Do we deny all connexion between the Old and the New Testament dispensations ? Do we deny that the types and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy, were a *shadow of good things to come* ? By no means. We warmly contend for this connexion. We maintain, with no less zeal than our opponents, that the whole system of typical and figurative observances enjoined upon the Jews, was full of important meaning, and had a pointed reference to Gospel blessings. We agree, also, that the Jewish Priesthood was typical ; but of what ? of a mere *human* Priesthood, to be established under the New Testament dispensation ? So far from this, that the Apostle, in writing to the *Hebrews*, says directly the contrary. He tells us, that, as the sacrifices offered by the priests under the law, prefigured the death of Christ, and could not with propriety be continued after that event had taken place ; so the Levitical Priesthood was a type of that divine High Priest, who once offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy offended justice, and entered, *by his own blood, into the holiest of all, even into heaven*. If any insist that, because the ministrations under the law were a *shadow of heavenly things*, we must have a priesthood under the Gospel of similar grades and organization ; they are bound, on the same principle, to carry the parallel through, and to maintain the continuance of *sacrifices*, and of many other things connected with the priestly office ; and I may venture to affirm, that they will find it quite as easy to make the scriptures speak in favour of the latter as of the former.

Accordingly the words *Priest* and *Priesthood* are never, in one instance, in the New Testament, applied to the ministers of the

Christian Church, as such.\* Episcopalians appear to be particularly fond of this language. It is frequently introduced into their public forms, and no less frequently used by their standard writers. But they employ it without the smallest countenance from scripture. This is the decided opinion of eminent Episcopal divines. "It is a common mistake," says Dr. (afterwards Bishop) *Stillingfleet*, "to think that the ministers of the Gospel succeed by way of correspondence and analogy to the priests under the law; which mistake hath been the foundation and original of many errors. For when, in the primitive Church, the name of *Priests* came to be attributed to Gospel ministers, from a fair compliance only, (as was then thought) of the Christians, to the name used both among Jews and Gentiles; in process of time corruptions increasing in the Church, those names that were used by Christians, by way of analogy and accommodation, brought in the things themselves principally intended by those names. So by the metaphorical names of *Priests* and *Altars*, at last came up the *sacrifice of the Mass*; without which they thought the names of Priest and Altar were insignificant."—*Irenicum*. p. ii. chap. vi. It is also well known that Archbishop *Cranmer*, Bishop *Ridley*, and several other eminently pious reformers of the Church of England, made zealous opposition to the use of the word *Altar*, and the whole system of phraseology connected with it, as a Popish affectation of conformity the Temple service

\* I am not ignorant that some advocates for this language have contended, that as the word *Priest* is evidently a corruption of the word *Presbyter*; and as the latter is certainly applied to New Testament ministers, the former may be considered as having a kind of scriptural warrant. But this conclusion is founded on a quibble. In the original Hebrew of the Old Testament scriptures, the sacred office of one who ministered in the Temple service, is expressed by a word, which, in the Septuagint, is always rendered *ἱερεύς*. This was the Old Testament word for a *Levitical Priest*. Now this word is never once used in the New Testament to designate a minister of the Christian Church. And accordingly, the translators of our English Bible, faithful to the distinction which they observed to be uniformly kept up in the sacred language, between the ministers of the Temple and those of the Church; uniformly call the former *Priests*, and their office the *priesthood*; while they as uniformly avoid applying these names to the latter, but call them, *Elders*, *Bishops*, *Pastors*, &c.

of the Jews; as utterly unsupported by scripture; and as highly mischievous in its tendency.

No less opposed to this principle is the opinion of Dr. *Haweis*, an Episcopal Divine, expressed in his *Ecclesiastical History*. "If, says he, the unfounded idea, that Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, were to succeed to the High Priest, Priests, and Levites, were true, we must surely have found some intimation of it in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. That men of research," he adds, "should broach such puerilities is surprising."

Dr. *Mosheim*,\* in his account of the corruptions which began to creep into the Church, in the *second century*, makes the following remarks. "The Christian Doctors had the good fortune to persuade the people, that the ministers of the Christian Church succeeded to the character, rights, and privileges of the *Jewish priesthood*; and this persuasion was a new source both of honours and profits to the sacred order. This notion was propagated with industry sometime after the reign of *Adrian*, when the second destruction of *Jerusalem* had extinguished among the Jews all hopes of seeing their government restored to its former lustre, and their country arising out of ruins. And accordingly the *Bishops* considered themselves as invested with a rank and character similar to those of the *High Priest* among the Jews, while the *Presbyters* represented the *Priests*, and the *Deacons* the *Levites*. It is, indeed, highly probable, that they who first introduced this absurd comparison of offices so entirely distinct, did it rather through ignorance and error, than through artifice or design. The notion, however, once introduced, produced its natural effects; and these effects were pernicious."

But admitting, for a moment, that the Levitical priesthood is a proper model for the Christian Ministry; what is the consequence? It follows inevitably, that as there was but *one High Priest* over the Jewish Church, so there ought to be but *one Bishop* over the Christian Church. So far, then, as the argument has any

\* It is generally known that Dr. *Mosheim* was a *Lutheran* divine, and one of the most learned men of the 18th century. Of the work from which this quotation is made, Bishop *Warburton* expressed himself in the following terms—" *Mosheim's Compendium is excellent—the method admirable—in short, it is the only one deserving the name of an ecclesiastical history.*"



force, it goes to the establishment, not of *diocesan episcopacy*, but of a *Pope*, as the sole vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth and as the proper head of the Church. In fact, the whole argument is borrowed from the Papists,\* who have made the only rational and legitimate use of it: and indeed if the general principle be admitted, I see not how it is possible, in any consistency with the analogy contended for, to stop short of *one Universal Bishop*.

It is evident, then, that this fancied analogy between the Levitical priesthood, and the Christian ministry, is not only destitute of all support from Scripture, but is positively discountenanced and precluded by the New Testament; that if admitted, it would serve the cause of popery, and not that kind of prelacy for which the Church of England, and those of the same sect in this country, contend; and that it is connected with errors, and with a system of language directly calculated to lead men away from the simplicity of the Gospel.

II. Another argument urged by Episcopal writers in favour of their system, is—"That we actually find three distinct orders of Gospel ministers appointed by Christ, or under his authority, viz. *Apostles*, the *Seventy Disciples*, and *Deacons*; and that these correspond with the diocesan Bishops, the Presbyters, and the Deacons of their Church."

This argument may appear plausible to those who have looked

\* I am aware that hints of the least affinity between *Episcopacy* and *Popery*, are highly offensive to the friends of the former, and have been indignantly repelled. I take no pleasure in giving offence; but as the fact in question is certain, however seriously it may be denied; and as it is impossible to do justice to the cause of truth without stating it, I did not feel myself at liberty to withhold it. I have said, that this argument is borrowed from the *Papists*. No one will understand my meaning to be, that the argument was not invented or propagated until Popery had become *full-grown* and *mature*. The contrary is admitted. The Papacy had a *beginning* as well as a *completion*. It arose so gradually that even candid men will always dispute about the principal dates in its rise, progress, and establishment. My meaning is, that the artful parallel between the Jewish priesthood and the Christian ministry, was one of the means early employed by ambitious clergymen to increase their power; and has been always used by the Romish Church as one of the supports of her superstitious system.

only at the surface of the subject ; but the slightest examination will evince that it is altogether fallacious and nugatory.

Who were the seventy disciples? They were a set of men sent out on the same errand with the twelve Apostles, and, for aught that appears, were vested with the same powers. They were both commanded to go forth and proclaim, that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand* ; they were both endowed with the power of working miracles ; and no hint is given that the former were inferior to the latter. (Compare *Matth. x.* with *Luke x.*) The truth is, the first commission even of the twelve Apostles was limited and temporary. They were directed *not to go into the way of the Gentiles, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* This commission terminated at the death of Christ ; and was, after his resurrection, formally renewed, and made unlimited both with respect to time and place. But the Seventy Disciples had no such renewal and extension of their commission. They are mentioned but once in the history of our Lord's ministry by the Evangelists ; and after his resurrection, not a syllable is said respecting them. Now as the Jewish dispensation did not give place to the Christian until after the death of Christ, it will inevitably follow that the seventy disciples were never, strictly speaking, ministers of the Christian Church at all ; but only temporary missionaries, and that under the Old Testament dispensation.

The force of this reasoning can only be evaded by supposing, that the first commission given to the seventy disciples was unlimited both with respect to its duration and objects. If this were so, then they were superior to the twelve Apostles, whose first commission is acknowledged to have been limited and temporary. But if this were the case, what becomes of the correspondence between their office, and that of Presbyters, whom Episcopalians constantly represent as inferior to Bishops? On the other hand, if the commission of the seventy were temporary, and not afterwards renewed, then it will follow, that when our Lord ascended to heaven, he left but *one* order of ministers in his Church, which is precisely the fact for which Presbyterians contend. Nay, if the commission of the seventy were even allowed to be unlimited as to time, yet it was obviously confined to preaching the Gospel among *Jews*, and, of consequence, has nothing to do with us, who are of the Gentiles. So that whether their commission were permanent

or temporary, it affords no aid to the argument for prelacy, but rather opposes and subverts it. Until Episcopalians prove, not only that the seventy Disciples were sent on an inferior ministry, and were vested with inferior powers to those of the twelve; but also that *their* commission, as well as that of the twelve, was renewed; and that their Master left them in office when he ascended to heaven—until they prove both these, which they never have done, nor can do, the attempt to derive any aid from this source, in vindicating the doctrine of clerical imparity, is altogether vain.

In support of the foregoing remarks, it is easy to produce high Episcopal authority. Dr. *Whitby* speaks on the subject in the following terms.—“Whereas some compare the Bishops to the Apostles, and the seventy to the Presbyters of the Church, and thence conclude that divers orders in the ministry were instituted by Christ himself, it must be granted that the ancients did believe these two to be divers orders, and that those of the seventy were inferior to the order of the Apostles; and sometimes they make the comparison here mentioned:—But then it must be also granted that this comparison will not strictly hold; for the seventy received not their mission as Presbyters do from Bishops, but immediately from the Lord Christ, as well as the Apostles; and in their first mission were plainly sent on the same errand, and with the same powers.”—*Notes on Luke* x. 1.

Bishop *Sage*, a writer still more zealous for diocesan Episcopacy, expresses himself on the same subject, in a manner no less decisive. “The Apostles,” says he, “got not their commission to be governors of the Christian Church, till after the resurrection. And no wonder, for this their commission is most observably recorded, *John* xx. 21, &c. No such thing is any where recorded concerning the seventy. Nothing is more certain than that the commission which is recorded *Luke* x. did constitute them only temporary missionaries, and that for an errand which could not possibly be more than temporary. That commission contains in its own bosom clear evidences, that it did not instal them in any standing office at all, much less in any standing office in the Christian Church, *which was not yet in being* when they got it. Could that commission which is recorded *Luke* x. any more constitute the seventy standing officers of the Christian Church,

“than the like commission recorded *Matthew* x. could constitute the Twelve such standing officers? But it is manifest that the commission recorded *Matthew* x. did not constitute the twelve governors of the Christian Church; otherwise what need of a new commission for that purpose after the resurrection? Presumable, therefore, it is, that the seventy had no successors, office-bearers in the Christian Church, seeing it is so observable that they themselves received no commission to be such office-bearers.”\*

And as the seventy disciples were not permanent ministers, having ceased to be officers in the Church long before *deacons* were appointed; so it is equally certain, that *deacons* are not to be considered as an order of clergy at all; and, of course, their office affords no countenance to the notion of different grades among ministers of the Gospel. That deacons are not an order of *clergy*, as our Episcopal brethren make them, and consequently have no right, as such, to preach and baptize, is evident, both from the account of the original institution of the office, and from the subsequent statement of their qualifications, which we find in Scripture. The account of the institution of the office of deacon is in the following words, Acts vi. 1—6. *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenos, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the Apostles: and, when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.* I appeal to every candid reader of this passage, whether it is possible to consider these persons as

\* See his *Vindication of the Princip. of the Cyprianick Age*. Chap. vi. Sect. 6.

commissioned to preach the Gospel? Is there any thing like it mentioned, or hinted at, in the whole account? Rather, is not the contrary plainly expressed? Do not the Apostles expressly say, that desiring to give themselves exclusively to prayer and the ministry of the word, they wished to be relieved from the care of the poor, and the service of tables? Do they not declare, that attending to this secular concern would render it necessary for them to *leave the word of God*? Are not the *deacons* expressly said to be appointed *over this secular business*? And is it credible, after all, that preaching and baptizing should be, either in part or in whole, their proper employment? To suppose this is to consider the inspired Apostles of Christ, as speaking and acting with the inconsistency of children. No less decisive is the language of the Apostle *Paul* in stating to *Timothy* the qualifications necessary for this office. In describing the proper qualities of a *Bishop* or *Pastor*, the Apostle had, in a preceding verse, represented *aptness to teach* as an essential accomplishment; but when he proceeds to speak of *deacons*, he gives no hint of any such accomplishment, nor does he once, in the remotest manner, allude to public teaching, or administering either of the sacraments, as a part of their duty.

Episcopalians, indeed, tell us, that *Philip*, one of those who had been made a *Deacon* in *Jerusalem*, is afterwards represented as preaching and baptizing in *Samaria*. And hence they infer that these functions belonged to his office as *Deacon*. But they forget that *Philip* is expressly called (Acts xxi.) an *Evangelist*; an office the leading and essential duty of which is preaching the Gospel. The truth is, *Philip*, a short time after being set apart as a *deacon*, was driven from *Jerusalem*, by persecution; and being no longer able to fulfil the duties of this office, it is probable that some person residing in that city was chosen his successor, and that he was advanced to the higher office of *Evangelist*, and sent abroad to preach the Gospel. As to *Stephen's* disputing with the opposers of the Christian faith, immediately after being appointed a *Deacon*, it is nothing to the purpose. This was not preaching the Gospel. In fact it was nothing more than every private Christian, in every age, is bound to do when his faith is attacked. Every thing, therefore, found in Scripture on this subject, is opposed to *Deacons* being considered as an order of *Clergy*; and in favour of their

being regarded, as they are in the Presbyterian Church as officers whose peculiar business it is to take care of the poor.

It is not denied, indeed, that, as in regard to other matters, so with respect to the Deacon's office, encroachment and corruption soon began to appear in the Church; and that he who was originally appointed to take care of the poor, and "serve tables," began, in some parts of the Christian Church, as early as the third and fourth centuries, to be a *preacher* and *baptizer*. But we have abundant evidence that this was considered, even on the part of at least some of those who record the fact, as a departure from the primitive model. *Origen* (*Tract. 15 in Matt.*) does by no means express himself as if he believed preaching and baptizing to be the appropriate work of the Deacon. "Those Deacons," says he, "who do not manage well the money of the Churches committed to their care, but act a fraudulent part, and dispense it, not according to justice, but for the purpose of enriching themselves; these act the part of money changers, and keepers of those tables which our Lord overturned." *Hilary* says, concerning the fourth century: "The deacons do not publicly preach." *Comment. in Ephes. 4.* In the *Apostolical Constitutions*, which, though undoubtedly spurious as an apostolical work, may probably be referred to the fourth or fifth centuries, it is recorded, (*Lib. 8. cap. ult.*) "It is not lawful for the deacons to baptize, or to administer the Eucharist, or to pronounce the greater or smaller benediction." *Jerome*, in his letter to *Evagrius*, calls deacons ministers of *tables* and of *widows*. And *Oecumenius*, a learned commentator, who lived several centuries after *Jerome*, in his commentary on *Acts vi.* expresses himself thus—"The Apostles laid their hands on those who were chosen deacons, not to confer on them that rank which they *now* hold in the Church, but that they might, with all diligence and attention, distribute the necessities of life to *widows* and *orphans*." Nothing can be clearer, then, from the testimony of Scripture, and of early antiquity, than that the deacon's office had, originally, nothing to do with preaching or baptizing; and that investing him with these powers is an unwarrantable departure from the primitive model.

Of the three orders, then, contended for in this argument, there remains but *one*, viz. the *Apostles*, who received a permanent commission to be ministers of the Gospel, and who, in this character,



are to be considered as having successors. The seventy disciples had ceased to exist, as officers in the Church, a considerable time before the *Deacons* were appointed ; and it is trampling upon every intimation of Scripture on the subject, to make the latter an order of clergy at all. The favourite Episcopal doctrine, therefore, of clerical imparity, receives not the least countenance from this boasted argument.

It is impossible not to observe the difficulties to which our Episcopal brethren are reduced, in endeavouring to show, on their own principles, that three orders of clergy have been maintained at every period. Considering the twelve Apostles and the seventy disciples, as two distinct orders appointed by our Lord before his crucifixion, they have thought themselves bound to find a *third* order, during that period. And what expedient do you suppose they have adopted to make out their beloved number ? Why, some of them gravely tell us that Christ himself was one of the orders of Clergy at that time ! I will not so far insult your understandings, Brethren, as to attempt a refutation of this idea. But if this were the case, then, to say nothing of other objections, the *Apostles* stood in the place of *Presbyters*, which is contrary to the Episcopal system. Besides, where will the zealous advocates for the doctrine of three orders find their favourite number, even on their own principles, immediately after the ascension of Christ, when the *Deacons* had not been appointed, and when we hear no more about the seventy disciples ?

III. Closely connected with the foregoing argument is another, which is urged with great confidence by many episcopal writers. It is : “ That the apostles, while they lived, held a station in the Church superior to all other ministers ; that *Bishops* are the proper successors of the *apostles* ; and that they hold a corresponding superiority of character and office.”

If this argument be examined, it will be found to have no other force than that which consists in a mere gratuitous assertion of the point to be proved.

The ministry of the Apostles was, in some respects, *extraordinary*, and of course terminated with their lives. In other respects, it was *ordinary*, and transmitted to their successors. Considering them in the former light, as men distinguished by the extraordinary gifts

of the Holy Ghost ; as endowed with immediate inspiration, with the knowledge of tongues, with the power of discerning spirits, and working miracles, and of conferring that power on others ; and as invested with authority to order every thing relating to the Churches of Christ, under the unerring guidance of the Spirit of God, until the canon of Scripture, the grand charter and directory of the Church, should be completed ; considering them in this character, the apostles had no successors. They were exalted above all bishops. Their character was strictly personal and incommunicable. The scriptures give no hint of any class of ministers coming after them, to be endowed with a similar character ; and until those who claim something like Apostolic pre-eminence produce satisfactory testimonials that they possess similar gifts and powers, they must excuse us for rejecting their claims.

Considering the ministry of the apostles in those respects in which it was ordinary and perpetual, they had, and still have, successors ; and nothing is more easy than to show that these successors consist of all those, without exception, who are empowered to go forth and teach *men the way of salvation, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* ; that is, all regular ministers, who are clothed with authority to preach the Gospel and administer sacraments. For it was in immediate connexion with the command to perform these ordinary functions, that the promise, which is considered as constituting the ministerial succession, was given—*Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*. Could the advocates of episcopacy show from Scripture, that the powers possessed by the apostles were afterwards *divided* ; that, while one class of ministers succeeded them in the ordinary duties of preaching and administering sacraments, another class succeeded them in some higher and more appropriate duties ; their cause would rest on better ground ; but this, as was before observed, can never be proved. There is not a syllable in Scripture that looks like such a *divided* succession ; nor has it ever been so much as pretended that a passage is to be found which gives a hint of this kind. On the contrary, as has been repeatedly before mentioned, the Scriptures uniformly represent preaching the Gospel, and administering sacraments, as the most important and honourable of all ministerial functions.

Accordingly, when we ask those who adduce this argument,

whence they derive the idea that diocesan bishops peculiarly succeed the apostles in their apostolic character, (for this supposition alone is to their purpose,) they refer us to no passages of Scripture asserting or even hinting it ; but to some vague suggestions, and allusions of a few of the early Fathers. Now, on such a subject, even if the Fathers were unanimous, we might and ought to hesitate, if nothing like what they intimate were to be found in the word of God. But it ought to be known and remembered, that the Fathers contradict one another, and the same Fathers contradict themselves on this subject. Several of them expressly represent *presbyters* as the successors of the apostles. Among others, *Ignatius*, than whom no Father is more highly esteemed, or more frequently quoted as an authority by Episcopalians, generally represents *presbyters* as standing in the place of the apostles. The following quotations are from his far-famed *Epistles*. “The “presbyters succeed in the place of the bench of the Apostles.” “In like manner let all reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ, and “the bishop as the Father, and the presbyters as the sanhedrim of “God, and college of the apostles.” “Be subject to your presbyters “as to the apostles of Jesus Christ our hope.” “Follow the “Presbytery as the apostles,” &c.\* Other quotations from the Fathers might easily be adduced, equally pointed and decisive against the argument in question ; but these are reserved for a subsequent letter.

But still the advocates of diocesan episcopacy ask : “Do not “the Apostles, in many passages of the New Testament, manifestly assert their superiority over other ministers ? Do we not “find them exercising jurisdiction over uninspired pastors ; directing them *how to behave themselves in the house of God* ; and, “in short, authoritatively ordering the conduct of ministers, and “the affairs of the Churches ? Now, say they, if the Apostles “had any successors in the exercise of this general jurisdiction “over other ministers, these successors can be no other than our “*diocesan Bishops*, who are constituted governors of the inferior “clergy ; which is precisely the point for which we contend.” To this reasoning I answer, the Apostles did possess, and did

\* The testimony of *Ignatius* will hereafter be noticed. The single object of these quotations is to show that he represents the *presbyters* as successors of the apostles.

exercise the general power of jurisdiction and superintendency which has been stated. In the infancy of the Church it was necessary that they should do so. Being under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, they were to the primitive Churches what the New Testament is to us, the only infallible standard. But does it follow that they must have successors in this paramount authority over other ministers, after the sacred canon was completed, and the reason of their extraordinary powers had ceased? Besides, let us attend to the consequences to which the Episcopal reasoning on this subject will conduct us. The Apostles, it is granted, gave authoritative instruction, or, if you please, exercised jurisdiction over the Churches and ministers which they had constituted. Among others, this apostolic authority was exercised over *Timothy*, *Titus*, and *Epaphroditus*, whom all Episcopalians consider as *diocesan Bishops*. In fact it would be difficult to select individual ministers over whom apostolic authority and direction were more remarkably exercised than over these. Now, we ask the advocates of episcopacy, Was this authoritative control over these Bishops, the exercise of an *ordinary*, or of an *extraordinary* power? If they say, of an *extraordinary* power, then they give up the argument; for, on the same principles, we may and do contend, that the whole jurisdiction of the Apostles over other ministers of the Gospel, arose from their extraordinary character, and the particular situation of the Church, and expired with them. If, on the other hand, they say, that this was the exercise of an *ordinary* power, then it must inevitably follow, that there is a divine warrant for a permanent order of ministers, in the Christian Church, *superior* to *bishops*, and invested with authority over them; thus making *four* instead of *three* orders of clergy. It is not possible to avoid one or the other of these conclusions; and they are equally destructive to the episcopal system.

Accordingly, the whole argument for the superiority of *Bishops* drawn from their being considered as the proper and exclusive successors of the apostles in their official pre-eminence, has been pronounced invalid, and wholly abandoned by some of the most distinguished writers of the Church of England. In this list are the names of Dr. *Barrow*, Mr. *Dodwell*, Bishop *Hoadly*, and others of equal eminence.

The judgment of the very learned and able Episcopalian, Dr.

*Barrow* is too decisive to pass unnoticed. The following quotation is from his celebrated treatise on the *Pope's supremacy*; and although his main object is to refute the Papists; yet it is remarkable that the very same reasoning by which the Popish claim of apostolical succession is set aside, is also fatal to a claim substantially similar, advanced by Protestant high-churchmen. The Doctor speaks thus: "The apostolical office, as such, was personal  
 "and temporary; and therefore, according to its nature and design,  
 "not successive, nor communicable to others, in perpetual descendance from them. It was, as such, in all respects extraordinary, conferred in a special manner, designed for special  
 "purposes, discharged by special aids, endowed with special  
 "privileges, as was needful for the propagation of Christianity,  
 "and founding of churches. To that office, it was requisite that  
 "the person should have an immediate designation and commission from God: that he should be endowed with miraculous  
 "gifts and graces, enabling him both to assure his authority, and  
 "to execute his office: that he should be able, according to his  
 "discretion, to impart spiritual gifts: and that he should govern in  
 "an absolute manner, as being guided by infallible assistance, to  
 "which he might appeal, &c.—Now such an office, consisting of  
 "so many extraordinary privileges and miraculous powers, which  
 "were requisite for the foundation of the Church, and the diffusion  
 "of Christianity, against the manifold difficulties and disadvantages  
 "which it then needs must encounter, was not designed to continue  
 "by derivation; for it contained in it divers things, which apparently were not communicated, and which no man without gross  
 "imposture and hypocrisy could challenge to himself." P. 79, &c.

IV. A fourth argument urged by the advocates of Episcopacy, is: "That *Timothy* and *Titus* were each appointed to the fixed  
 "superintendency of a large diocese, the former over *Ephesus*, the  
 "latter over *Crete*; that the duties required of them, and the  
 "powers vested in them, were evidently superior to those of ordinary Presbyters: in a word, that they were no other than proper  
 "*diocesan Bishops*."

This argument is a corner stone of the Episcopal fabric, adduced with much zeal, and relied on with the utmost confidence, by most of the advocates of prelacy.



It is unfortunate, however, that all the premises from which the conclusion is drawn, are assumed, without any satisfactory, or even plausible evidence. How does it appear that *Timothy* and *Titus* were Bishops, in the Episcopal sense of the word? They are nowhere, in Scripture, called by this name. *Timothy*, on the contrary, is expressly styled an *Evangelist*. 2 *Tim.* iv. 5. And it is probable, that *Titus*, being called to similar duties, bore the same character. Now what is meant by an *Evangelist*? He was an officer, says *Eusebius*, appointed "to lay the foundations of the faith, in barbarous nations, to constitute them pastors, and having committed to them the cultivating of those new plantations, to pass on to other countries and nations."\* No description can apply more perfectly to the work assigned to *Timothy* and *Titus*, as every one who looks into the sacred history must instantly perceive. They were not settled pastors, but itinerant missionaries. They sustained no fixed or permanent relation to the Churches of *Ephesus* or *Crete*; and amidst their numerous and almost constant travels, were probably as long, and perhaps longer, in other places than in these. As for *Titus*, Dr. *Whitby* himself acknowledges, that "he was only left at *Crete* to ordain elders in every city, and to set in order the things that were wanting; and that, having done that work, he had done all that was assigned him in that station; and, therefore, St. *Paul* sends for him the very next year to *Nicopolis*. *Titus* iii. 12." And with respect to *Timothy*, the same learned Episcopal writer also confesses, that "there is no satisfactory evidence of his having resided longer at *Ephesus*, than was necessary to execute a special and temporary mission to the Church in that place." *Preface to his Comment. on Titus.*

Some Episcopalians, of slender information, have triumphed, because in our common Bibles, at the close of the second epistle to *Timothy*, there is a *Postscript*, in the following words: *The second epistle unto Timotheus, ordained the first bishop of the Church of the Ephesians, was written from Rome, when Paul was*

\* After quoting an authority so often referred to by Episcopalians, and so high in their estimation as that of *Eusebius*, I will add, that the word *Evangelist* is still used in the Presbyterian Church, and with the same sense attached to it as in the days of *Eusebius*. Among us, an ordained minister, who has no pastoral charge, and who itinerates to preach the gospel in regions which are destitute of it, is called an *Evangelist*.



brought before Nero the second time. And, also, at the close of the epistle to *Titus*, a similar postscript, importing that *Titus* was the first bishop of *Crete*. But it is well known that these postscripts make no part of the sacred text. It is acknowledged, by all learned men, that they were interpolated, by some officious transcribers, more than 400 years after the Christian æra. They are not to be found in any of the oldest and most authentic copies of the original. They are not the same in all the copies in which they are found. They were solemnly excluded from the earliest English translations ; and, for a long time after their introduction, they were generally printed in a different type from the inspired text, in order to show that they form no part of the sacred canon. Of course, as all Episcopal writers of respectability acknowledge, they afford no evidence which deserves the least attention in the case before us.

But if there be no evidence that *Timothy* and *Titus* were diocesan *Bishops*, either in the sacred text, or in the spurious interpolations, which, by ignorant persons, have been sometimes mistaken for it ; whence, you will ask, has this notion, so confidently maintained by episcopal writers, taken its rise ? It seems to have been first suggested by *Eusebius*, in the fourth century, as a thing which tradition “*reported*” in his day, but of which he found no certain record ;\* and after him this tradition has been servilely copied, and assumed as a fact by a succession of writers. Dr. *Whitby*, notwithstanding all his zeal for episcopacy, speaks on the subject in this manner. “The great controversy concerning this, and the epistles to *Timothy* is, whether *Timothy and Titus* were indeed made bishops, the one of *Ephesus*, and the proconsular *Asia* ; the other of *Crete*. Now of this matter I confess I can find nothing in any writer of the *first three centuries*, nor any intimation that they bore that name.” And afterwards he

\* *Eusebius*, in the first chapter of his History, speaking of the difficulties of his undertaking, and of the small assistance he could gain from any preceding writers, expresses himself thus: “Being the first who have taken in hand this work, we enter on a solitary and untrodden way, praying that God may be our guide, and the power of our Lord and Saviour our help ; yet we cannot find even the bare footsteps of any who have trodden this path before us. We find only a few small and scattered narratives of which we can avail ourselves, &c.” Again, in

adds, generally concerning the whole argument—"I confess that "these two instances, absolutely taken, afford us no convincing "arguments in favour of a settled diocesan episcopacy, because "there is nothing which proves they did or were to exercise these "acts of government rather as *bishops* than as *Evangelists*."

But it is still urged, that some of the powers represented in Scripture as given to *Timothy* and *Titus* clearly indicate a superiority of order. Thus *Paul* besought the former to *abide still at Ephesus*, and gave him directions with regard to the selection and ordination of ministers. And he also appointed the latter to *ordain elders in every city of Crete*, giving him, at the same time, particular instructions as to the manner in which he should exercise his ordaining power, and *set in order the things that were wanting*. "Here," say the advocates for episcopacy, "we "find in fact the pre-eminent powers of *diocesan Bishops* vested "in these men; and as long as they possessed the *powers* of "bishops, it is of small moment by what *name* they were called."

"the fourth chapter of his third book, he speaks as follows: "That "Paul, preaching to the Gentiles, planted the Churches from *Jerusalem* "to *Illyricum*, is manifest both by his own words, and the testimony of "Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. Also in what provinces *Peter* preached "to those of the circumcision, and delivered the doctrine of the New "Testament, appears, most evidently, by the Epistle universally ascribed "to him, which he addressed to the Hebrews that were scattered "throughout *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*. But "how many, and what sincere imitators of the apostles, governed the "churches planted by them, it is not easy to say, except so far as may "be gathered from the words of the apostle himself. *Timothy* is "reported to have been the first Bishop of the Parish of *Ephesus*, and *Titus* of the Churches of *Crete*," &c. Language of this kind plainly shows that *Eusebius* had very few and uncertain guides after he left the New Testament. He lived in a day when clerical impurity had made considerable progress; and, of course, tradition would be apt to attach the same ideas to the character of a Bishop in the apostle's days, as actually belonged to it in the fourth century. But still, though the title of Bishop meant one thing in the days of *Timothy*, and quite another in the days *Eusebius*; he and others thought themselves warranted in applying the popular language to those primitive ministers. Let it never be forgotten, however, that Episcopalians with one voice admit that the title of *Bishop* is applied in Scripture to the *Pastors* of particular churches.

But on this argument several remarks immediately occur, which entirely destroy its force.

The *first* is, that even if we allow *Timothy* and *Titus* to have held such a superior ecclesiastical rank, as that for which Episcopalians contend, still no certain argument can be drawn from their case in favour of an established arrangement in the church. That they sustained a character in some respects *extraordinary*, and were called to act on occasions in some respects out of the *common* course, none will deny. Are we sure that, in these respects, their mission is to be a precedent for us? Because officers of a certain character were sent, on a particular occasion, to organize churches, and to ordain ministers, in *Ephesus* and *Crete*, does it follow, upon any principle of legitimate reasoning, that officers of precisely the same character are indispensably *necessary* in *all countries* and in *all ages* to perform a similar service? Because the Apostle *Paul* in fact partook with other ministers in several ordinations, are we to infer that no ordination was valid, while the apostles lived, unless one of them was present, and participated in the transaction? By no means. We know that the inference would be false. For we read that *Timothy* and *Titus*, who were certainly subordinate to *Paul*, and who received commands and instructions from him as their superior, were sent on an ordaining tour. We read that certain *Prophets and Teachers*, at *Antioch*, such as *Simeon*, *Lucius*, and *Manaen*, who were of a different description of ministers from either of the former, still possessed the ordaining power; and that *Timothy* himself was ordained by the laying on of the hands of *Presbyters*. In short, they are *four* classes of Gospel ministers, *ordinary* and *extraordinary*, mentioned in the New Testament, viz. *Apostles*, *Evangelists*, *Prophets*, and *Teachers*, or *Presbyters*. These different titles, it is granted on all hands, were intended to indicate some diversity of station and employment in the Apostolic age. But however they differed among themselves with respect to their endowments and qualifications, we find that they all possessed alike the power of setting apart others to the work of the ministry, and actually ordained. Nay, an instance precisely in point occurs in the history of the Episcopal Church in the United States. In the consecration of the first bishops for that church, the Archbishop of *Canterbury* presided. Yet we all know that the presence and

co-operation of the primate were not *necessary*, either to the validity or regularity of the consecration. Three ordinary bishops would have done just as well. Yet if some zealous hierarchist, a thousand years hence, should insist, that because he was present, the consecration could not have taken place without him; the argument would have just as much force as that which we are now considering. Yielding the whole fact, then, concerning the character of *Timothy* and *Titus*, for which our episcopal brethren contend, it does not afford the least help to their cause. It no more proves that precisely such officers are necessary to the performance of every valid ordination, in every subsequent age, than the consecration of the first High Priest, under the Old Testament dispensation, by *Moses*, rendered it necessary that every succeeding induction of the same officer should be performed by a similar person, and with similar ceremonies; which we know was neither required nor done.\*

But, *secondly*—We utterly deny that *Timothy* was sent to *Ephesus*, and *Titus* to *Crete*, in any such character as our episcopal brethren claim for them. We have seen that the fact, if admitted, would be useless to their cause. But it is not admitted, and cannot be proved. To say, that the very circumstance of being sent to ordain ministers, and to organize churches, shows that they acted in virtue of a superior episcopal character, every discerning reader will perceive is not proof, but merely taking for granted the whole point in dispute. In truth, the whole argument, drawn from the mission of *Timothy* and *Titus*, when carefully analysed, and distinctly stated, amounts to this—"None but diocesan bishops, as  
 "a superior order of clergy, have a right to ordain ministers, and  
 "organize Churches: but *Timothy* and *Titus*, were sent to perform  
 "services of this kind: therefore *Timothy* and *Titus* were diocesan  
 "bishops." In this syllogism, the major proposition, viz. that which asserts that none but bishops, as a superior order, can ordain, is taken for granted. But does not every one see that this is precisely

\* Perhaps it will be objected that this argument proves too much, and may be made, by pressing it a little further, to support the cause of *lay-ordinations*. By no means. For though different descriptions of ministers, both *ordinary* and *extraordinary*, ordained in the days of the apostles, yet we read of no ordination but what was performed by *ministers* of some kind

the point to be proved? Until this fundamental proposition, then, be first established, the whole argument is such as all logicians agree in stigmatizing as deceptive and worthless.

*Thirdly*—We know not that there were any Church officers ordained, either at *Ephesus* or *Crete*\*, previous to the mission of *Timothy* and *Titus* to those Churches. The advocates for Episcopacy, I know, take the liberty of supposing that there were *Presbyters* already ordained and residing at both those places, before the period in question. And hence they conclude that Presbyters were not considered by the Apostle as lawfully vested with the power of ordaining, “or else,” say they, “he would not have thought it necessary to send superior officers so great a distance, to perform this work.” But this supposition is made wholly without evidence. The probability is, that there were no such Presbyters prior to the arrival of *Timothy* and *Titus*: and until the friends of Episcopacy prove that there *were*, the whole argument on which they build so much, falls to the ground. The Gospel had, indeed, been preached, and great numbers converted, both at *Ephesus* and *Crete*, a considerable time before; but we have no evidence that any ecclesiastical organization or appointments had, as yet, taken place,† and if so, then it was surely necessary to send *special* missionaries, to commence ecclesiastical order, where every thing was in a rude and unorganized state: If there were no Presbyters already ordained and residing in those Churches, it is obvious that sending others to perform what was necessary, does not afford the slightest presumption against the ordaining power of Presbyters.

\* Archbishop *Potter*, one of the highest authorities among Episcopalians, concedes that we have no reason to believe there were *any ministers* ordained at *Crete*, prior to the mission of *Titus* to that place, See *Discourse of Ch. Gov.* p. 91, 92, &c. This simple concession, when traced to its legitimate consequences, amounts, so far as *Titus* is concerned, to a surrender of the whole argument.

† “One qualification for a Bishop was, that he should not be a *novice* “that is, one *newly* converted; time being required to prove men “before they could be intrusted with the care of the church: and “therefore the apostles used not to *ordain ministers* in any place “before the *second* time of their coming thither.” *Potter’s Disc. of Ch. Gov.* p. 91.

But, *fourthly*—Admitting, for the sake of argument, that there were Presbyters ordained, and residing, both at *Ephesus* and *Crete*, previous to the respective missions of *Timothy* and *Titus*, still no advantage to the Episcopal cause can be derived from this concession. We learn from the Epistles directed to these Evangelists, that divisions and difficulties existed in both the Churches to which they were sent. Among the Christians at *Ephesus* there had crept in *ravenous wolves*, who annoyed and wasted the flock ; and also some who had *turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding what they said, or whereof they affirmed*. And, in the church of *Crete*, it appears, that there were *many unruly and vain talkers, and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision ; who gave heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turned from the truth*. Under these circumstances, the pious and benevolent *Paul*, who had laboured so much in those churches, would naturally feel himself called upon to do something for their relief. But what was to be done? He was not able, or he did not think proper, to go himself to direct their affairs. He could not send them copies of that sacred charter, with which the churches are now furnished, viz. the New Testament, a considerable portion of which was not then in existence. The ministers residing there were probably themselves involved in the disputes and animosities which prevailed ; and, therefore, could not be considered as suitable persons to compose tumults, and to settle differences in which they had taken a part. There was no alternative, but to send *special missionaries*, immediately empowered by a person of acknowledged authority, to act in the various exigencies which might arise ; to curb the unruly ; to reclaim the wandering ; to repress the ambition of those who wished to become *teachers*, or to thrust themselves into the *ministry*, without being duly qualified ; to select and ordain others, of more worthy character ; and, in general, to *set in order* the affairs of those churches. Now, as both *Timothy* and *Titus* had been recently with the Apostle, when they set out on their respective missions, it is not to be supposed that the epistles which we find directed to them, were written solely, or even principally, for their instruction. It is probable that they were rather intended as *credentials*, to be shown to the churches of *Ephesus* and *Crete* ; as means of commanding their *respect* and *obedience* to these



missionaries ; and, after answering this occasional purpose, to be placed on record in the sacred canon, to serve as a guide to the church in every age. Considering the subject in this light, the mere *fact* of these missionaries being sent to *Ephesus* and *Crete* does not afford even the shadow of ground for ascribing to them the high episcopal powers, of which so much is said. No reason that deserves to be called even plausible can be urged, for supposing they had any higher character than that of *presbyters*.

A *fifth* remark, which invalidates the argument under consideration is this. We know not that either *Timothy* or *Titus*, *alone*, ordained a single presbyter, at *Ephesus* or *Crete*. The epistles giving directions with respect to those churches are, indeed, addressed to the individual ministers whose names they bear. But this might have been done merely because they were the most conspicuous and able of the ministers called to act in those departments of the church. It is evident that some parts of these epistles were intended to guide the churches, as well as the ministers to whom they were sent. Besides, in all the particular instances of ordination which are recorded in the New Testament, we find a *plurality* of ordainers present and officiating. And though we are not formally told, that any other ordainers accompanied *Timothy* and *Titus*, in visiting the churches to which they were respectively sent; we cannot undertake to affirm that there were none such. Yet the whole force of the episcopal argument depends upon taking for granted that each of those missionaries was *alone* vested with the *whole* ordaining and governing power, in the diocese supposed to be assigned him.

In the *sixth* place—With respect to *Timothy*, there is a fact which militates strongly against the argument in question. It is this. If he were ever Bishop of *Ephesus*, it must have been when Paul's first epistle to him was written : for it is in this epistle alone that the supposed evidence of his episcopal powers is found. But this epistle, as the most learned and judicious commentators agree, was written from *Macedonia*, about the year of Christ 58 ; a short time before the celebrated interview of *Paul* with the elders of *Ephesus*, at *Miletus*. This is the date assigned to it by *Athanasius* and *Theodoret*, among the ancients ; and by Dr. *Hammond*, the learned *Grotius*, Dr. *Lightfoot*, Dr. *Benson*, Dr. *Doddridge*, Professor *Michaelis*, and other modern critics of equal

reputation. Now if *Timothy* were constituted Bishop of *Ephesus* at this period, how came the apostle *Paul*, a short time afterwards, in his conference with the *elders* whom he met at *Miletus*, to style them the *Bishops* of that Church, and to commit to them its government, as we have seen in a former letter?—Was *Timothy*, after holding this office a few months, so soon displaced? Or, if he still bore the office, is it credible that the apostle should have totally forgotten the circumstance; that he should declare the *presbyters* of that Church to be its *Bishops*, and charge them to execute episcopal duties; and that, when predicting divisions and heresies which were about to arise among them, he should say nothing of any superior officer as their spiritual guide, and bond of union? It is not credible. No impartial reader can believe that *Timothy*, at this time, bore any such fixed relation to the Church of *Ephesus* as that for which the friends of prelacy contend.

A seventh remark on this argument, also, deserves attention. *Timothy* and *Titus* are considered by Episcopalians as diocesan Bishops; the former of *Ephesus*, the latter of *Crete*. But it is evident from the New Testament history that neither of these ministers was long stationary in any one place. They appear to have been almost constantly itinerating to preach the Gospel and organize Churches. With respect to *Timothy*, we find him at one period with *Paul* at *Philippi* and *Thessalonica*: a little afterwards at *Athens*: then at *Thessalonica* again. Some years after this, we find him successively at *Ephesus*, *Macedonia*, and *Corinth*: then returning to *Ephesus*: soon afterwards re-visiting *Corinth* and *Macedonia*: then going to *Jerusalem*: and last of all, travelling to *Rome*, where the sacred history leaves him. In like manner, we may trace *Titus*, in his successive journeys, from *Syria* to *Jerusalem*: thence to *Corinth*: from *Corinth* to *Macedonia*: back again to *Corinth*: thence to the Island of *Crete*: afterwards to *Dalmatia*, and, as some suppose, back again to *Crete*. Does this look like a fixed episcopal charge? Nothing more unlike it.

Finally—If *Timothy* and *Titus* were diocesan Bishops, then the apostles sustained a still higher office. It is evident from the whole tenor of Scripture, that the apostolic character was superior to that of the *Evangelists*: and *Paul*, especially, always addresses *Timothy* and *Titus* in a style of authority. But if this be so, then we have, by divine right, *Archbishops* as well as *Bishops*; that is,

*four* orders of clergy, instead of *three*. I know that the advocates of episcopacy disclaim this consequence. They tell us that there is no divine warrant for more than *three* orders; and that *Archbishops* and *Metropolitans* are only different grades of the same order, resting, not on Divine appointment, but human expediency. But are they consistent with themselves in saying this? They are not. On the one hand, they contend, that the Apostles held a station of superiority and government over all other ministers; and this, not on the ground of their *extraordinary* gifts and circumstances; but in virtue of a power which was *ordinary* and *perpetual*, and in which they had successors. On the other hand, the same persons contend, that *Timothy* and *Titus*, though subject themselves to the *apostles*, possessed, in their turn, an episcopal superiority and government over the *presbyters* of *Ephesus* and *Crete*: and this, not founded on any peculiar occasion or exigency, but on essential and permanent principles, and transmitted to Bishops in all succeeding ages. Here, then, are two grades of Episcopal power; both equally founded on divine right; both superior to Presbyters, yet unequal to each other; running parallel with each other for a number of years before the decease of the Apostles; both resting on principles ordinary and perpetual; both transmitted to successors; both essential to the well-being of the Church. On this principle Episcopalians are driven to the necessity of contending for *two orders of Bishops*, as indispensable in the organization of every Church.\* If, to avoid this difficulty, they grant, either that the authority of the *apostles* over *Timothy* and *Titus* was *extraordinary*; or that the authority of *Timothy* and *Titus* over other ministers was so, they instantly surrender one of their boasted arguments for a settled prelacy. But a principle which either proves too much, or leads to absurdity, is false, and of course inadmissible.

In short; when the advocates for diocesan episcopacy prove, that *Timothy* and *Titus* were sent to *Ephesus* and *Crete* to remain longer, and on a more important errand than to several other

\* We avoid the whole of this difficulty by our doctrine. We hold that all the authority over other ministers, with which the *apostles* and *evangelists* were vested, was *extraordinary* and *necessarily* arose from the sacred canon not being yet completed, and the Church not yet settled.

churches which they visited : when they prove that these ministers went to those churches in a higher character than that of *itincrant presbyters*, or *evangelists*, the very title, and the *only* title, which the inspired apostle gives to one of them : when they prove that each of them ordained, and exercised other episcopal powers *alone*, that is, without the presence or aid of colleagues : when they prove that there were presbyters regularly ordained, residing at *Ephesus* and *Crete*, before these missionaries went thither, who might have performed the rite of ordination, supposing presbyters to possess this power : when they prove that *Timothy* and *Titus* ordained, not as *presbyters*, but in virtue of some superior inlierent character ; and that, for the purpose of clothing them with this character, they received a new and appropriate ordination : when they prove these things, the argument under consideration will be of some value. Even then, several essential links in the chain of proof for establishing an *indispensable* and *unalterable divine right*, will be wanting. But, until these leading facts are established, the argument is absolutely worth nothing ; and, after all the changes that may be rung upon it, and all the decorations with which it may be exhibited, it amounts only to a gratuitous assumption of the whole point in dispute.

V. Another argument frequently adduced in favour of diocesan episcopacy, is founded on the addresses in Rev. ii. and iii. to the *Angels* of the Asiatic Churches. “These *Angels*,” say the advocates of prelacy, “were individuals, who presided over the “seven Churches, which are addressed in those chapters ; and “who, of course, could be no other than *Bishops*.”

On this argument, also, much stress is laid. But, really, its sole merit, as in several preceding cases, consists in confident assertion, and in begging the whole question.

Is it *certain*, that by these *Angels* were meant individual ministers ? Some, and, among the rest, very respectable episcopal commentators, have thought that, by this word *collective bodies* of pastors were intended. Again ; supposing individuals to be meant, what is there in the word *Angel* which ascertains its meaning to be a diocesan bishop ? *Angel* signifies a *messenger* ; and, accordingly, some able episcopal writers have conjectured (and no mortal can do more than conjecture) that the *Angels* referred to in this passage of

Scripture were a kind of itinerant *legates* or special *missionaries* to several the Churches mentioned in connexion with them. But, admitting that they were resident ministers; perhaps they were pastors of single congregations; or perhaps they were the *Moderators*\* or *Chairmen* of the respective presbyteries of *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, &c. Or, perhaps, in each of those cities, the eldest and most conspicuous pastor was selected as the medium for addressing the church of the city in which he lived. I say *perhaps*, for each of these opinions has had its advocates, among Episcopalians, as well as others; and it is impossible to be certain which of them approaches nearest to the truth; or, whether they are not all erroneous. Amidst this total uncertainty, then, is it not abusing the credulity of men, to the last degree, to take the whole question in controversy for granted; to pronounce with confidence that no other than diocesan bishops could have been intended; and to represent as blinded with prejudice all who do not see and acknowledge this to be the case?

Let it be remembered, however, that, so far as the insulated word *Angel* carries with it a meaning to us, that meaning is much more favourable to presbytery than episcopacy. It was shown in a former letter that, in every Synagogue among the Jews, there was an officer, who, among other names, was called *the Angel of the church*. It was also shown that the Synagogue model, particularly with respect to the names and duties of ministers, was adopted in the Christian Church. Now if this reasoning be admitted, we must consider these *angels* as ordinary pastors, addressed either in their individual or collective capacity, probably the latter;† and the whole strain of the addresses to them

\* Thus, in our church, when a letter is written to one of our presbyteries, to that of *New York*, for instance, it is always addressed, "To the Moderator of the Presbytery of *New-York*."

† I am sensible that there is considerable diversity of opinion among Presbyterians, as well as Episcopalians, with respect to the character of the Apocalyptic *Angels*. But as the sacred writer gives us no information relative to their character, excepting what may be gathered from the *name*: and as there are at least half a dozen different opinions on the subject, all equally reconcilable with the scriptural representation, it is no wonder that this diversity of opinion should exist. In truth, when thoroughly sifted, the whole argument will be found perfectly nugatory,

serves rather to confirm than to invalidate this conclusion.— But we are gravely told, that some of the early fathers declare, that these Angels were single persons, and *bishops*. Though this is not that *Scriptural* testimony, which we are now demanding, yet we will admit the fact. Some of the fathers *do* say so. And some of the fathers go further, and tell us that they were *Archbishops*; nay, some of them even go so far as to mention the *names* of these Archbishops; though, unfortunately, they disagree among themselves in making out a list of the names, and, therefore, excite a suspicion that all their testimony on the subject is unworthy of credit. But, further, it is certain that some *other* fathers, equally entitled to respect, represent these angels, not as individual bishops, but as *collective bodies*. Now which of these early writers shall we believe? No wise man can be at a loss to answer. Their mutual contradictions teach us to put no confidence in this kind of testimony.

I will only add, that the learned advocate for prelacy, Mr. *Dodwell*, expressly gives up this whole argument. In his book, entitled, *one Priesthood and one Altar*, published in 1683, he expresses the opinion commonly held by episcopal writers, that the Angels of the seven Asiatic Churches were diocesan bishops; but in his *Parænesis*, published about twenty years afterwards, he explicitly renounces this opinion; and, while he expresses much uncertainty with respect to the character of these angels, and concedes the impossibility of deciding who they were, he rather intimates his belief that they were *itinerary legates*, sent from *Jerusalem*, answering to the *seven spirits*, mentioned *Zech. iv. 10*, that are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

VI. The last argument deduced by the friends of episcopacy from Scripture, which appears worthy of notice, is that which is founded on two parallel passages, one in 1 Cor. xii. the other in Ephes. iv. The former is in these words—*And God hath set some in the church; first, Apostles; secondarily, Prophets; thirdly, Teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.* The latter, as follows—

and to afford no solid evidence in favour of either *episcopacy* or *presbytery*



*And he gave some, Apostles ; and some, Prophets ; and some Evangelists ; and some, Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, &c.* In these passages, the friends of episcopacy assure us, there are various orders of Christian Ministers, and only enumerated, but also expressly said to be *set* or fixed in the church by its great Head. There must, then, say they, be various orders of clergy, by divine appointment, to the end of the world.

But if these passages of Scripture are considered as representing the *ordinary* ministry of the church, in all ages, they prove by far too much. They prove that every regular church must have *more than three* orders of clergy : They prove that, among these, there must be *Apostles* and *Prophets*, as well as *Evangelists*, *Pastors*, and *Teachers* : They prove that no true church is without *miracles*, *gifts of healing*, and *diversities of tongues* : And, if the order of arrangement is that of dignity, they prove that *governing* the church is among the lowest grades of ecclesiastical duty. The friends of episcopacy will, perhaps, say, that some of the offices and gifts here enumerated, were *extraordinary*, and confined to the apostolic age. This is readily granted. It is too obvious to be denied. But the moment our episcopal brethren take this ground, they surrender the whole argument founded on these passages. For if *all* the offices enumerated in these passages were not *fixed* in the church, and if the *whole* enumeration were not intended as a model for us, the *principle* of the argument is abandoned.

But, admitting, for the sake of argument, that the various classes of Gospel ministers here enumerated were all intended to be perpetual in the church : admitting all the difficulties with respect to *Prophecy* and *Miracles*, which no church now claims, to be surmounted : and admitting also, that the number of orders enumerated, can, by some process of ecclesiastical arithmetic hitherto unknown, be reduced from *four* or *five* to *three*, the number of which Episcopalians are so fond ; there is still an unfortunate circumstance, which effectually deprives them of all benefit from the argument ; or, rather, which turns it against them. It is this : All the classes or denomination of ministers here enumerated are represented in the New Testament, as vested with power to *ordain*,

and as actually exercising this power. The ordaining power of *apostles* is disputed by none. *Prophets* and *teachers*, we have seen, performed an ordination at *Antioch*; *Timothy* and *Titus*, who were *evangelists*, exercised the ordaining power at *Ephesus* and *Crete*; and *presbyters* ordained *Timothy* to the work of the ministry. Now if these different denominations correspond with the three orders of *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*, in modern times; then it follows, that the power of *ordination*, instead of belonging exclusively to the *first* of these three orders, belongs equally to them *all*. A consequence which, though perfectly reconcilable with our doctrine, is absolutely destructive to the episcopal scheme.

I have now given you, my brethren, a sketch of the strongest arguments deduced from Scripture in favour of episcopacy, with which I am acquainted. It is for you to judge whether these arguments do really establish the claim which they are intended to support. It is for you to judge whether they give even *probability* to this claim. Above all, it is for you to decide, whether they show that it is a claim of unalterable *divine right*, and its admission *essentially necessary* to the regular organization of the church, and the valid ministration of the sacraments. For myself, I must conscientiously declare, that the arguments attempted to be drawn from Scripture, in favour of prelacy, do not appear to me to possess the smallest degree of real force; and that even to concede to them the merit of *plausibility*, is more than an impartial judge would allow. I can truly say, that when I first approached the investigation of this subject, I expected to find much more in the sacred volume appearing to favour the episcopal cause, than I have since been able to discover. It did not occur to me as possible, that such confident appeals to Scripture could be continually made on grounds so entirely unsolid. I might have recollected, indeed, the decisive tone with which many ingenious and learned men have resorted to the sacred oracles to establish the supremacy of the *Pope*, and the damning sin of separation from the church of *Rome*. Nor ought we to be surprised that pious and learned men, of other denominations, should fall into similar mistakes, and express equal confidence of finding support where none is in reality to be found. The late Mr. *Burke* has somewhere said, "Let us only suffer any person to tell us his story morning and evening

“but for one twelve-month, and he will become our master.” Many zealous advocates of episcopacy have been so long in the habit of saying, and of hearing it said, that the Scriptures “clearly,” “strongly,” and “unquestionably” declare in favour of their system; and some of them so little in the habit of reading the refutations of this error, that they unfeignedly believe it, and scruple not to stigmatize all who do not see it, as given up to blindness and prejudice. But, happily, we have the sacred volume in our hands as well as they; and after the most dispassionate examination, are compelled to pronounce their arguments from Scripture, nugatory; their confidence totally unwarranted; and the whole system which they profess to found on the word of God, a fabric resting alone on human contrivance.

After this statement, you will not be surprised to learn, that the whole testimony drawn from scripture, in favour of diocesan episcopacy, has been pronounced altogether inconclusive, by some of the warmest and ablest friends of that system. The learned *Dodwell*, one of the great oracles of high-churchmen, frankly confesses, that *Bishops*, as a superior order to *Presbyters*, are not to be found in the New Testament; that such an order had no existence until the beginning of the second century; that *presbyters* were the highest ecclesiastical officers left in commission by the Apostles; and that the first diocesan *Bishops* were ordained by *Presbyters*, the last apostle having been dead a number of years before this new order was instituted in the church. And even those who attempt with confidence to found diocesan episcopacy on the Scriptures, exhibit such contradiction and confusion among themselves as entirely to invalidate the whole testimony which they would derive from this source. Scarcely any two of their great standard writers can agree upon any one principle of scriptural evidence. And accordingly, you have seen, that all the leading arguments drawn from scripture in support of prelacy, have been pronounced wholly untenable, and each in its turn surrendered, by a number of the most pious and learned divines of the church of England. Can Episcopalians, then, complain that we are not convinced by arguments, which some of the most competent judges among themselves have declared to be inconclusive and even frivolous?

But this is not all: the *great body* of episcopal writers, even those who contend most earnestly for the scriptural evidence in

their favour, acknowledge, if I mistake not, that their system is not *directly* laid down in the word of God. In other words, they confess, that the Scriptures, taken absolutely *alone*, will not bear them out in their claims. But they suppose, and insist, that the *facts* which are mentioned in the sacred history, *taken in connexion* with the writings of the *early Fathers*, decidedly support this claim. That is, the New Testament, in its own divine simplicity, is insufficient for their purpose ; but, *explained*, and *aided*, by the writings of fallible men, it declares positively in their favour.

Is it so, then, that a doctrine, held not merely as important, but fundamental ; not merely as fundamental, but essential to the very existence of the church ; without which her officers are unauthorized, her ministrations invalid, and her sacraments a nullity, cannot be maintained from the Bible alone ? Is it so, that the Great Head of the church has given us his word to be a *light to our feet and a lamp to our path* ; that he has denounced the most awful threatenings against those who *add to*, or *take from the words of this book* ; and yet that an article which lies at the foundation of all the interests and hopes of the christian church cannot be directly proved out of that book ? what is this but saying, that the Bible is, not a rule either *perfect*, or *sufficient* for the church ? what is this but embracing a principle which makes human testimony co-ordinate with that of God ; and which must involve us in all the mazes and uncertainty of *tradition* ? but the admission of the principle in question, is not merely taking uncertain and dangerous ground ; it is liable to a more serious objection. To say that an article of faith or practice is essential to the well being of the church, which is the body of Christ, and, at the same time, that it cannot be distinctly and satisfactorily proved from Scripture ; is, in effect, bringing a charge against the great Head of the church, which I know the advocates of this position would abhor equally with ourselves ; and which is too shocking to be expressed in language.

But the advocates of episcopacy tell us, that our demand of *express warrant* from Scripture, in this case, will carry us too far. They contend that several articles of christian belief and practice, generally deemed of great importance, cannot be distinctly proved from Revelation *alone*. And, particularly, they insist, that if we discard *episcopacy* for want of direct scriptural testimony in its

favour, we must, on the same principle, discard *infant baptism*, and the *christian sabbath*, neither of which, say they, can be fully established on the ground of Scripture, unconnected with the writings of the early fathers.

To this plea I answer without hesitation, that if it be true that a divine warrant for *infant baptism* and the *christian sabbath* is not to be found in the Bible; if it be true that they cannot be distinctly supported from the sacred volume, independent of all other authorities; then we ought instantly to discard them. Under such circumstances, we should be unworthy of the name of protestants if we retained them an hour. Nor is it any valid apology for the addition of human devices to the institutions of Christ, that other additions stand on the same ground, and are equally indefensible.

But it is *not true* that these important articles of Christian belief and practice, cannot be directly proved from Scripture. And to assert that they stand, in this respect, on a footing with the doctrine of diocesan episcopacy is, though certainly not an intended, yet a real and gross imposition on the credulity of mankind. THE DIVINE RIGHT OF INFANT BAPTISM CAN BE DECIDEDLY AND FULLY PROVED FROM SCRIPTURE ALONE. We can prove from Scripture, with absolute certainty, the divine right of INFANT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP; and we can prove, from the same source, and with equal certainty, the divine right of BAPTISM TO ALL CHURCH MEMBERS. This is warrant as express as could be desired. On these two great facts, as on a rock, the friend of infant baptism may stand undaunted and immovable to the end of time\*: and he would be able to do this, if every volume in creation, excepting the Bible, were committed to the flames. Scarcely less evident is the scriptural warrant for the *christian sabbath*. When we find one day in seven kept by the people of God, as a day of sacred rest, from the creation till the giving of the law by *Moses*: when we find the great principle, that a seventh part of time must be solemnly

\* These two facts by no means comprise the *whole* of the evidence found in Scripture in favour of *infant baptism*. The impartial reader of the sacred oracles will find in them much more to the same effect. But these are sufficient; and constitute, to all intents and purposes, a full and abundant warrant.

consecrated to God, explicitly laid down in the decalogue, and declared to be of universal and perpetual obligation :\* when we find the disciples of Christ, after the resurrection of their Lord, invariably convening on the *first day of the week*, for public worship : when we find this day formally and emphatically styled the *Lord's day* : when we find all this in Scripture, could any man doubt of the divine right of the *first day sabbath*, even if no uninspired author had ever written a line ? It is certainly gratifying to find such abundant evidence as we do in favour of both these ordinances in a number of early and authentic writers ; but we do not stand in need of human testimony. We have a higher and better warrant. This *alone* we quote, before a christian tribunal, as conclusive. And when the friends of episcopacy produce any thing like a similar warrant from Scripture, in behalf of their doctrine, we will believe them.

On the whole, then, brethren, I trust you will find little difficulty in deciding what conclusion ought to be formed concerning a system which cannot claim the least solid scriptural warrant on which to rest ; and which flies to the writings of fallible men to help out its scanty evidence. You will feel no disposition, I hope, to call it by hard names ; or to load its advocates with reproaches. But you will understand your principles, as Christians and as protestants, too well to *receive for doctrines the commandments of men* ; or to take ground which will oblige you even indirectly to concede the *imperfection* and *insufficiency* of the Word of God.

\* It seems to be taken for granted, by many, that the *fourth* commandment, enjoins the perpetual observance of the *seventh* day *in order*. This is certainly a mistake. It merely consecrates to God a *seventh part of time* ; leaving the precise day in order to be made the subject of after regulation. That this regulation was made we have satisfactory evidence.



## LETTER IV.

## TESTIMONY OF THE PRIMITIVE FATHERS.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE most respectable and authentic writers in the christian church, who lived during the first four or five centuries after Christ, are emphatically styled, by ecclesiastical historians, *the fathers*. The writings of these venerable men have been much resorted to in this controversy. Many, even of those who acknowledge the feebleness and insufficiency of the episcopal arguments from Scripture, believe that the fathers speak decidedly in their favour. Whatever doubts may attend the evidence in support of their system, drawn from other sources, *here*, they imagine, there can be no question. For the sake of such persons ; and to enable you to decide how far many positive declarations which are made by the friends of episcopacy are entitled to credit, it becomes necessary to inquire what these early writers attest on the subject before us.

I shall not now stay to ascertain what degree of respect is due to the writings of the fathers in general. It is my duty, however, to state, that we do not refer to them, in any wise, as a rule either of faith or of practice. We acknowledge the Scriptures *alone* to be such a rule. By this rule, the fathers themselves are to be tried ; and, of course, they cannot be considered, properly speaking, as the Christian's authority for any thing. It is agreed, on all hands, that they are no infallible guides : and it is perfectly well known to all who are acquainted with their writings, that many of them are inconsistent both with themselves, and with one another. We protest, therefore, utterly against any appeal to them as an authority on this subject. *Though they, or an angel from heaven*, should bring us any doctrine, as essential to the order and well-being of the church, which is not to be found in the Word of God, we are bound by the command of our Master to reject them.

But, as our episcopal brethren have frequently complained, that we treat the fathers with too little respect ; and even insinuated that we have no way of avoiding the force of their testimony, but by

endeavouring to destroy their credibility ; I will give as little ground of uneasiness on this head as possible. Waiving, therefore, all further discussion of their title to credit, I will cheerfully admit them as credible witnesses with respect to matters of *fact*, which might be supposed to come within their knowledge. On this ground, then, I will join issue with our opponents ; and not only admit, but engage to abide by the testimony of their chosen witnesses.

In examining the writings of the fathers, I shall admit only the testimony of those who wrote within the FIRST TWO CENTURIES. Immediately after this period so many corruptions began to creep into the church ; so many of the most respectable christian writers are known to have been heterodox in their opinions ; so much evidence appears, that even before the commencement of the third century, the papacy began to exhibit its pretensions ; and such multiplied proofs of wide spreading degeneracy crowd into view, that the testimony of every subsequent writer is to be received with suspicion. Besides, if diocesan episcopacy existed, and were of the fundamental importance that our episcopal brethren make it to be, we may surely expect to find some reference to it in the records of two hundred years ; and especially when we consider that those were years of the greatest simplicity and purity ever known to the church.

Before we proceed to examine what the fathers say on this subject, let us be careful to recollect precisely, what our episcopal brethren contend for, and what they are bound to prove by these witnesses, in order to make good their claims. When they show us passages in which these early writers merely speak of *bishops*, they seem to imagine that their point is gained : but such passages are, in fact, nothing to their purpose. We do not deny that there were *bishops* in the primitive church : on the contrary, we contend that the word *bishop* was a title given, in apostolic times and long afterwards, to every pastor of a particular congregation. Again, when they quote passages which barely enumerate *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*, as distinct officers in the church, they can derive no assistance even from these ; because there were, doubtless, *presbyters*, at that time, as well as now, who, though in *full orders*, were not invested with a *pastoral charge* ; and who must, therefore, be distinguished from such as were literally *overseers* or

*bishops* of particular flocks. Besides, we know that there were *ruling elders* in the primitive church ; a class of presbyters confessed to be inferior to bishops in their ecclesiastical character. In enumerating church officers, then, there was frequently a necessity for making the distinction above stated, without in the least favouring the pretended *superiority of order* among those who laboured in the word and doctrine. The advocates for diocesan episcopacy, then, if they would derive any support to their cause from the writings of the fathers, must do what they have never yet done. They must produce from those venerable remains of antiquity, passages which prove, either by direct assertion, or fair inference, that the *bishops* of the primitive church were a *distinct order* of clergy from those *presbyters* who were authorized to preach and administer sacraments, and superior to them ; that these *bishops*, when they were advanced to this superior office, had a new and distinct *ordination* ; that each bishop had under him a number of congregations, with their pastors, whom he governed ; that these bishops were exclusively invested with the right of *ordaining*, and administering the right of *confirmation* ; and that this kind of episcopacy was considered, by *the whole* primitive church, as an institution of Jesus Christ. When any *one* of these facts is fairly proved, from early antiquity, the friends of Presbyterian church government will feel as if they had something like solid argument to contend with ; but not till then. Now, after having given much close and serious attention to this subject, I can venture to assure you, that in all the authentic writings which have come down to us, of those fathers who lived within the first *two hundred years* after Christ, there is not a *single sentence* which can be considered, by an impartial reader, as affording the least support to *any one* of these positions.

When you find the friends of episcopacy asserting that the *fathers*, in the “ plainest terms,” “ unanimously,” and “ with one voice,” declare in their favour, you would naturally expect to find these early writers saying *much*, and expressing themselves in *decisive* and *unequivocal* language on this subject. But, how will you be surprised to learn, that there is not a single authentic writing extant, composed within the first three hundred years after Christ, that speaks *directly* and *formally* to the purpose, on any one point in this controversy ! The *first* writer who undertook to

discuss the question, whether *bishops* and *presbyters* were distinct in the apostle's days, was *Jerome*, who lived in the fourth century: and how he has decided the question we shall see in the next letter. In all the writings of earlier date, the character and powers of church officers are mentioned in an indistinct and cursory manner; frequently by way of remote allusion, so as to leave it doubtful whether they were intended at all; generally without any apparent design to convey information respecting them; and always as if the subject were considered by the writers as of minor importance. It is from these *hints*, *allusions*, and occasional *intimations*, that we are to deduce the early opinions on the point before us.

Let us make the experiment. Let us bring forward the testimony of these ancient worthies in order. And in doing this, it shall be my aim, not only to cite those passages which appear favourable to my own cause; but also faithfully to state the strongest of those which are usually quoted by our episcopal brethren in support of their claim.

In the catalogue of the fathers, who say any thing worthy of our attention on this subject, *Clemens Romanus* holds the first place. He lived towards the close of the first century; had doubtless conversed with several of the apostles; and left behind him one *Epistle*, directed to the brethren of the church at *Corinth*, the authenticity of which is generally admitted. The occasion of the epistle was this. There had been a kind of schism in the church of *Corinth*, in which the body of the brethren had risen up against their pastors, and unjustly deposed them. The design of *Clemens* in writing was to call these brethren to a sense of their duty, and to induce them to restore and obey their pastors. In this epistle the following passages are found. "The apostles, going abroad, preaching through countries and cities, appointed the first fruits of their ministry to be *bishops* and *deacons*. Nor was this any thing new; seeing that long before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture in a certain place, 'I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.'\*" Again—"The apostles knew by

\* *Clemens* here, no doubt, refers to *Isa. lx. 17.* which, in our English Bibles, is rendered, *I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness*; but which, in the *Septuagint*, with which he was probably most conversant, is interpreted thus: *I will appoint thy rulers in peace,*

“ our Lord Jesus Christ, that contentions would arise about the  
 “ name of *episcopacy* ; and, therefore, having a perfect foreknow-  
 “ ledge of this, they appointed persons, as we have before said ;  
 “ and gave direction how, when they should die, other chosen and  
 “ approved men should succeed in their ministry. Wherefore we  
 “ cannot think that those may be justly thrown out of their minis-  
 “ try, who were either appointed by them, or afterwards chosen  
 “ by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church.  
 “ For it would be no small sin in us should we cast off those from  
 “ their *Episcopate* (or Bishoprick) who holily and without blame  
 “ fulfil the duties of it. Blessed are those *presbyters* who, having  
 “ finished their course before these times, have obtained a perfect  
 “ and fruitful dissolution. For they have no fear lest any one  
 “ should turn them out of the place which is now appointed for  
 “ them.” And a little afterwards—“ It is a shame, my beloved,  
 “ yea, a very great shame, and unworthy of your Christian pro-  
 “ fession, to hear, that the most firm and ancient Church of the  
 “ Corinthians, should, by one or two persons, be led into a sedition  
 “ against its *presbyters*. Only let the flock of Christ be in peace  
 “ with the *presbyters* that are set over it. He that shall do this,  
 “ shall get to himself a very great honour in the Lord. Do ye,  
 “ therefore, who first laid the foundation of this sedition, submit  
 “ yourselves to your *presbyters* ; and be instructed into repentance,  
 “ bending the knee of your hearts.”\*

*Clemens*, in these passages, evidently represents the Church at *Corinth* as subject not to an individual, but to a company of persons, whom he calls *presbyters*, or *elders*. He exhorts the members of that Church to be *obedient* to these *presbyters* ; and expostulates with them, because they had opposed and ill-treated their *presbyters*, and cast them out of their *bishoprick*. Thus we see that in the writings of *Clemens*, as well as in the New Testament, the titles *bishop* and *presbyter*, are interchangeably applied

and thy bishops (ἐπισκοπους) in righteousness. If we interpret *Clemens* rigidly, he will stand as an advocate for two orders instead of three. But he, doubtless, only meant to quote this passage as a general promise, that under the New Testament dispensation there should be a regularly organized church, and proper officers; without undertaking to define either their number or grades.

\* *Clement's* epistle to the Corinthians, sections 42, 43, 44.

to the same men. This venerable father gives not the least hint of any distinction between the office of *bishop* and *presbyter*, but plainly represents them as the *same*; nor does he once speak of *three orders* in the Christian ministry. He mentions a plurality of *bishops* in the same city; nay, he not only represents the great *cities* as being furnished with *bishops*, but speaks of them as being also appointed in the *country villages*.

Had there been an individual in the Church at *Corinth* vested with the powers of a modern bishop, could *Clemens*, with any decency have avoided mentioning or alluding to him? Who so proper to settle differences between presbyters and their people, as the *bishop*, empowered to rule both? And if the place of such a bishop were *vacant*, by death, or otherwise, was it not natural for *Clemens* to say something about the appointment of a successor, as the most likely way to restore order in the Church? The single fact of his total silence concerning such an officer, under these circumstances, is little short of conclusive evidence, that the venerable writer knew of no other *bishops* than the *presbyters* to whom he exhorted the people to be subject.\*

There is one passage in this epistle of *Clemens Romanus*, which has been frequently and confidently quoted by episcopal writers, as favourable to their cause. It is in these words; sect. 40, 41. "Seeing, then, these things are manifest to us, it will believe us to take care that we do all things in order, whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do. And, particularly, that we perform our offerings and service to God at their appointed seasons; for these he has commanded to be done, not rashly and disorderly, but at certain times and hours. And, therefore, he has ordained, by his supreme will and authority, both where, and by what persons, they are to be performed. They, therefore, who make their offerings at the appointed season are happy and accepted; because, that, obeying the commandments of the Lord, they are

\* The learned *Grotius* speaks of it as a proof of the antiquity and genuineness of *Clemen's* epistle, "that he no where takes notice of that peculiar authority of bishops, which was first introduced into the Church of *Alexandria*, and from that example into other Churches; but evidently shows, that the Churches were governed by the common council of *presbyters*, who, by him, and the apostle *Paul*, are all called *bishops*." *Epist. ad Bignon*.



“ free from sin. For the *High-Priest* has his proper services ;  
 “ and to the *priests* their proper place is appointed ; and to the  
 “ *Levites* appertain their proper ministries ; and the lay-man is  
 “ is confined within the bounds of what is commanded to lay-men.  
 “ Let every one of you, therefore, brethren, bless God in his pro-  
 “ per station, with a good conscience, and with all gravity ; not  
 “ exceeding the rule of the service to which he is appointed.  
 “ The daily sacrifices are not offered every where ; nor the peace-  
 “ offerings ; nor the sacrifices appointed for sin and transgression ;  
 “ but only at *Jerusalem* ; nor in any place there ; but only at  
 “ the altar before the temple ; that which is offered being first  
 “ diligently examined by the *High-Priest*, and the other ministers  
 “ we before mentioned.”

From this allusion to the priesthood of the Jews, the advocates of episcopacy infer that *Clemens* intended to exhibit that priesthood as a pattern for the Christian ministry. But nothing more is necessary to set aside this inference than a little attention to the scope and connexion of the passage. *Clemens* is endeavouring to convince the members of the *Corinthian Church* of the necessity of submission to their pastors, and of the great importance of ecclesiastical order. For this purpose, in passages a little preceding that which is above quoted, he alludes to the regularity which prevails in the *natural world*, and particularly among the various members of the human body. He refers also to the subordination which is found necessary in *military affairs*, remarking, that some are only common soldiers, some prefects, some captains of fifties, some of hundreds, and some of thousands ; every one of whom is bound to keep his own station. And, finally, in the passage under consideration, he calls the attention of those to whom he wrote to the strict order that was observed in the temple service of the Jews, and especially with respect to the times and circumstances of their offering the commanded sacrifices. Such is the plain and unquestionable scope of the whole passage. Is there any thing here like an intimation of *three orders* in the Christian ministry ? As well might it be contended that *Clemens* would have the Christian Church organized like an *army* ; and that he recommends *four orders* of ministers, corresponding with the four classes of military officers, to which he alludes. How wonderful must be the prejudice that can make this use of an

allusion ! And, above all, how weak and desperate must be that cause, which cannot be supported but by recurring to such means !

The next early writer, who says any thing on this subject, is *Hermas*. Concerning the life and character of this father, we have no information. We only know, that he left behind him a work entitled *Pastor*, which has come down to our times, and the authenticity of which is generally admitted. It was originally written in Greek ; but we have now extant only an old Latin version, of the author or date of which we know nothing. In this work the following passages relating to the ministry are found.

“ Thou shalt, therefore, say to those who preside over the Church, that they order their ways in righteousness, that they may fully receive the promise, with much glory.” Again,—“ After this, I saw a vision at home, in my own house ; and the old woman, whom I had seen before, came to me, and asked me, whether I had yet delivered her book to the *elders*. And I answered that I had not yet. She replied, thou hast done well ; for I have certain words more to tell thee. And when I have finished all the words, they shall be clearly understood by the elect. And thou shalt write two books, and send one to *Clement*, and one to *Grapte*. For *Clement* shall send it to the foreign cities, because it is permitted to him to do so. But *Grapte* shall admonish the widows and orphans. But thou shalt read in this city *with the elders who preside over the Church*.” Again—“ Hear now concerning the stones that are in the building. The square and white stones, which agree exactly in their joints are the apostles, and bishops, and doctors, and ministers, who, through the mercy of God, have come in, and governed, and taught, and ministered, holily and modestly, to the elect of God.” Again—“ As for those who had their rods green, but yet cleft ; they are such as were always faithful and good ; but they had some envy and strife among themselves, concerning *dignity and pre-eminence*. Now all such are *vain and without understanding*, as contend with one another about these things. For the life of those who keep the commandments of the Lord, consists in doing what they are commanded ; *not in principality, or in any other dignity*.” Once more—“ For what concerns the tenth mountain, in which were the trees covering the cattle,

“ they are such as have believed, and some of them have been bishops, that is, *presidents of the Churches*. Then such as have been set over inferior ministries, and have protected the poor, and the widows,” &c.\*

From one of the foregoing extracts, it is evident that *Hermas* resided at *Rome*; that he had a particular reference to the Church in that city; and that the period at which he wrote was, when *Clement*, before mentioned, was one of the *bishops* or *presidents* of that Church. From a comparison of these extracts, it will also appear that *Hermas* considered *bishops* and *elders* as different titles for the same office. He speaks of *elders* as *presiding over the Church of Rome*; he represents a *plurality of elders* as having this *presidency* at the same time; having used the word *Bishops*, he explains it as meaning those *who presided over the Churches*; and immediately after *bishops*, (without mentioning *presbyters*,) he proceeds to speak of *Deacons*, that is, those who are intrusted with *the protection of the poor and of the widows*.

On one of the passages quoted above, some zealous friends of episcopacy have laid considerable stress. It is this. “ The square and white stones, which agree exactly in their joints, are the *apostles*, and *bishops*, and *doctors*, and *ministers*, who, through the mercy of God,” &c. On this passage, *Cotelerius*, a learned Roman Catholic editor, has the following note. “ You have here the distinct orders of the hierarchy, in *apostles*, in *bishops*, exercising episcopacy, in *doctors*, or *presbyters*, teaching, and in *deacons* ministering.” In language of the same import, some protestant friends of prelacy have commented on the passage. It is really amusing to find grave and sober men attempting to make so much of a passage, in every respect, so little to their purpose. For, to say nothing of the evidently loose and fanciful nature of the whole comparison; it is not a warrant for *three*, but for *four* orders of clergy; and, of course, if it proves any thing, will prove too much for the system of any protestant Episcopalian.

The epistle of *Polycarp* to the church at *Philippi*, written early in the second century, stands next on the roll of antiquity. This venerable martyr, like *Clemens*, speaks of only *two orders* of

\* *Vision*, II. 4. III. 5, 6. *Similitude*, IX. 27.

church officers, viz. *presbyters* and *deacons*.\* He exhorts the Philippians to obey these officers in the Lord. "It behoves you," says he, "to abstain from these things, being subject to the *presbyters* and *deacons* as to God and Christ." And again: "Let the *presbyters* be compassionate and merciful towards all; turning them from their errors; seeking out those that are weak; not forgetting the widows, the fatherless, and the poor; abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unrighteous judgment; not easy to believe any thing against any; nor severe in judgment; knowing that we are all debtors in point of law." The word *bishop* is no where mentioned in his whole epistle; nor does he give the most distant hint as if there were any individual or body of men vested with powers superior to *presbyters*. On the contrary, he speaks of the *presbyters* as being intrusted with the *inspection* and *rule* of the church; for, while, on the one hand, he exhorts the members of the church to submit to them, he intreats the *presbyters* themselves to abstain from unrighteous judgment, and to have no respect of persons.

Perhaps it will be asked, Is not *Polycarp* spoken of, by several early writers, as *bishop* of *Smyrna*? And does not this fact alone establish the principle for which Episcopalians contend? I answer, by no means. *Polycarp* is indeed called by this name. So also is *Clement* called *bishop* of *Rome*, and *Ignatius* of *Antioch*. Nor, perhaps, have we any reason to doubt that they were so. But in what sense were they *bishops*? We say, they were scriptural, primitive *bishops*, that is, *pastors*, or among the *pastors*, of particular congregations. And in support of this assertion, we produce the testimony of scripture, and the uniform language of the truly primitive church. But whatever kind of *bishop* *Polycarp* was, we shall presently see that a contemporary father exhorts him to be personally acquainted with every member of his flock; to seek out all by name; and not to overlook even the *servant men and maids* of his charge. Whether the minister who could do this, was more than the pastor of a single congregation, I leave every man of common sense to judge.

\* It is worthy of remark, that the apostle *Paul*, in writing to the same church about 50 or 60 years before, also speaks of their having only two orders of officers, viz. *bishops* and *deacons*. See *Philip* i. 1. But those whom *Paul* styled *bishops*, *Polycarp* afterwards calls *presbyters*, the names in the time of *Polycarp*, as well as in the time of *Paul*, being still common.

The fourth place, in the list of apostolical fathers, belongs to *Ignatius*. The *epistles* which go under the name of this venerable christian bishop, have been the subject of much controversy. That some copies of them were interpolated, and exceedingly corrupted, in the dark ages, all learned men now agree.\* And that even the "shorter epistles," as published by *Usher* and *Vossius*, are unworthy of confidence, as the genuine works of the father whose name they bear, is the opinion of many of the ablest and best judges in the protestant world.

These epistles were first published at *Strasburg* in the year 1502. And, although only *seven* are now received as genuine, they were then *eleven* in number. In an edition published a few years afterwards there appeared *twelve*; and not long after that, *fifteen*; together with an additional letter from the *Virgin Mary* to *Ignatius*. Nor did they alter thus in *number* merely; for in some of those editions, several of the epistles were nearly twice as *large* as in others. Accordingly, archbishop *Wake*, in the preface to his translation of these epistles, remarks: "there have been considerable differences in the epistles of this holy man, no less than in the judgment of our Latin critics concerning them. To pass by the first and most imperfect of them, the best that for a long time was extant, contained not only a great number of epistles falsely ascribed to this author; but even those that were genuine, so *altered* and *corrupted*, that it was hard to find out the true *Ignatius* in them. The first that began to remedy this confusion, and to restore this great writer to his primitive simplicity, was our most reverend and learned Archbishop *Usher*, in his edition of them at *Oxford*, Anno 1644." The venerable Archbishop of *Armagh*, found two copies of six of these epistles in *England*; not in the original Greek, but in very barbarous Latin translations. In 1646, the learned *Isaac Vossius* found in the Medicean Library, a copy in Greek, containing seven epistles, and published it soon afterwards in *Amsterdam*. From

\* It is even agreed that some of these interpolations were made with the express view of furnishing support to the ambitious claims of *bishops*. Speaking of some of the interpolations, Dr. *Hammond*, a zealous Episcopalian, represents them as "immoderate," "extravagant," and "senseless;" and concludes that they are evidently the work of some "impostor."

these three copies Archbishop *Wake* has formed his English version, adopting from each what he thought most likely to be correct. *Usher* had much doubt of the genuineness of the seventh epistle, to Polycarp. "Nor," observes Archbishop *Wake*, "does *Isaac Vossius* himself deny but that there are some things in it, which "may seem to render it suspicious." Yet, on the whole, he published it, and *Wake* adopted it as genuine, with the other six. From the time of *Usher* to the present, there has been unceasing controversy concerning the genuineness of these epistles. The great body of Episcopal writers have felt so much interest in their supposed importance as witnesses in favour of prelacy, that they have generally contended for them as the genuine remains of the pious father whose name they bear. But it is believed, that a large majority of the learned of other Protestant denominations, for nearly two centuries have been of the opinion that they could not be relied upon, and ought never to be quoted as the unadulterated work of *Ignatius*: but that they bear manifest marks of having been interpolated long after the martyrdom of their reputed author. The following judgment of a learned and zealous Episcopalian, who writes in the *Christian Observer*, an English periodical, conducted with great ability by members of the established Church is worthy of notice. "Could six of the seven epistles, usually ascribed to *Ignatius* be "cited with the same undoubting confidence which has accompanied the foregoing quotations, the controversy concerning the "early existence of Episcopacy would be at an end. But, after "travelling so long in comparative obscurity, after being compelled "to close and strongly directed attention, in order to pick up three "or four rays of scattered light, we are in a moment oppressed and "confounded by the brightness of the mid-day sun. For in these "epistles we have the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, marshalled with unseasonable exactness, and repeated with "importunate anxiety. There appear, moreover, so many symptoms of contrivance, and such studied uniformity of expression, "that these compositions will surely not be alleged by any capable "and candid advocate for primitive episcopacy, without great "hesitation: by many they will be entirely rejected. I do not "mean to insinuate that the whole of these six epistles is a forgery; "on the contrary many parts of them afford strong internal evidence of their own genuineness: but with respect to the particu-



“lar passages which affect the present (the Episcopal) dispute, “there is not a sentence which I would venture to allege. The “language, at the earliest, is that of the fourth century.”\* When a zealous advocate of prelacy can write thus, there is surely ground for utter distrust of these epistles, when quoted as testimony on the subject before us.

But, instead of entering into this controversy, I will take for granted that the shorter epistles of *Ignatius*, (and they alone are now quoted among Protestants) are genuine, and worthy of implicit confidence. On this supposition let us examine them. And I will venture to affirm that instead of yielding to the cause of *diocesan episcopacy* that efficient support which is imagined, they do not contain a *single sentence* which can be construed in its favour; but, on the contrary, much which can only be reconciled with the primitive, *parochial episcopacy*, or Presbyterian government, so evidently portrayed in scripture, and so particularly defined in my first letter.

The following extracts from these *epistles* are among the strongest quoted by Episcopal writers in support of their cause.†

*Epistle to the church of Ephesus. Sect. v.* “Let no man “deceive himself; if a man be not within the altar he is deprived “of the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two be of such “force, as we are told; how much more powerful shall that of the “bishop and the whole church be? He, therefore, that does not “come together into the same place with it, is proud, and has “already condemned himself.”

*Epistle to the church of Magnesia. Sect. 2.* “Seeing then, “I have been judged worthy to see you, by *Damas*, your most “excellent bishop, and by your worthy presbyters, *Bassus* and “*Apollonius*, and by my fellow servant, *Sotio*, the deacon—I “determined to write unto you.” *Sect. 6.* “I exhort you that “ye study to do all things in divine concord; your bishop presid- “ing in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the “council of the apostles; and your deacons most dear to me, being

\* *Christian Observer*, Vol. ii. p. 723.

† To cut off all occasion of doubt, as to the fairness used in translating these extracts, I think proper to state, that I adopt the translation of Archbishop *Wake*.”

“intrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before all ages, and appeared in the end to us. Let there be nothing that may be able to make a division among you; but be ye united to your bishop, and those who preside over you, to be your pattern and direction in the way to immortality.” *Sect.* 7. As, therefore, the Lord did nothing without the Father being united to him; neither by himself, nor yet by his apostles; so neither do ye any thing without your bishop and presbyters: Neither endeavour to let any thing appear rational to yourselves apart; but being come together into the same place, have one common prayer, one supplication, one mind; one hope, in charity, and in joy undefiled. There is one Lord Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is better. Wherefore come ye all together as unto one temple of God; as to one altar; as to one Jesus Christ; who proceeded from one Father, and exists in one, and is returned to one.”

*Epistle to the Trallians. Sect. 2.* “Whereas ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ; who died for us, that so believing in his death, ye might escape death. It is therefore necessary, that, as ye do, so without your bishop, you should do nothing. Also be ye subject to your presbyters, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ our hope, in whom if we walk, we shall be found in him. The deacons, also, as being the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, must by all means please all.” *Sect. 7.* “Wherefore guard yourselves against such persons. And that you will do, if you are not puffed up; but continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God, and from your bishop, and from the command of the apostles. He that is within the altar is pure; but he that is without, that is, that does any thing without the bishop, and presbyters, and deacons, is not pure in his conscience.”

*The epistle to the church at Smyrna. Sect. 8.* “See that ye all follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ, the Father; and the presbytery as the apostles: and reverence the deacons as the command of God. Let no man do any thing of what belongs to the church separately from the bishop. Let that Eucharist be looked upon as well established, which is either offered by the bishop, or by him to whom the bishop has given his consent.

“Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people also be :  
 “as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church. It is not  
 “lawful, without the bishop, either to baptize, or to celebrate the  
 “holy communion. But whatsoever he shall approve of, that is  
 “also pleasing to God ; that so whatever is done, may be sure  
 “and well done.” *Sect. 12.* “I salute your very worthy bishop,  
 “and your venerable presbytery, and your deacons, my fellow  
 “servants ; and all of you in general, and every one in particular,  
 “in the name of Jesus Christ.”

*Epistle to Polycarp.* “*Ignatius* who is called *Theophorus*, to  
 “*Polycarp*, bishop of the church which is at *Smyrna* ; their  
 “overseer, but rather himself overlooked by God the Father, and  
 “the Lord Jesus Christ : all happiness ! *Sect. 1.* “Maintain thy  
 “place with all care, both of flesh and spirit : Make it thy endea-  
 “vour to preserve unity, than which nothing is better. Speak to  
 “every one as God shall enable thee.” *Sect. 4.* “Let not the  
 “widows be neglected : be thou, after God, their guardian. Let  
 “nothing be done without thy knowledge and consent : neither do  
 “thou any thing but according to the will of God ; as also thou  
 “dost with all constancy. Let your assemblies be more full : inquire  
 “into all by name : overlook not the men nor maid servants ; neither  
 “let them be puffed up, but rather let them be more subject to the  
 “glory of God, that they may obtain from him a better liberty.”  
*Sect. 5.* “It becomes all such as are *married*, whether men or  
 “women, to come together with the consent of the bishop ; that so  
 “their marriage may be according to godliness, and not in lust.”  
*Sect. 6.* “Hearken unto the bishop, that God also may hearken  
 “unto you. My soul be security for them that submit to their  
 “bishop, with their presbyters and deacons.”

These are the passages in the epistles of *Ignatius*, which epis-  
 copal writers have triumphantly quoted, as beyond all doubt  
 establishing their claims. Nothing stronger or more decisive is  
 pretended to be found in these far famed relics of antiquity. Now  
 I ask you, my brethren, whether there is in these extracts, a  
 sentence that can serve their purpose ?—Let me again remind you,  
 that they plead, not for such bishops as we acknowledge, that is,  
 pastors of single congregations, each furnished with elders and  
 deacons, to assist in the discharge of parochial duties. On the  
 contrary, they plead for *diocesan bishops*, as a distinct and superior

order of clergy, who alone are invested with the right to *govern* the church, to *ordain*, and to *confirm*. But is there a single hint in these extracts which looks as if the bishops mentioned in them were of a distinct and superior order? Is there a single word said about the powers of *ordaining* and *confirming* being appropriated to these bishops? Not a syllable that has the most distant resemblance to any thing of this kind is to be found in all the epistles before us.\* On the contrary, it is evident—

1. That the *bishop* so frequently mentioned by this venerable father, is only a *parochial bishop*, or in other words, the *pastor of a single congregation*. The church of which this bishop has the care is represented, throughout the epistles, as coming together to *one place*; as worshipping in *one assembly*; as having *one altar*, or *communion table*; as eating of *one loaf*; having *one prayer*; and, in short, *uniting* in all the acts of solemn worship. But all this can only apply to a single congregation. Again, the bishop here spoken of, is represented as *present with his flock* whenever they come together; as *conducting their prayers*, and *presiding* in all their public service; as the only person who was authorized, in ordinary cases, to administer *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*; as the person by whom all *marriages* were celebrated; and whose duty it was to be *personally acquainted* with all his flock; to take notice, *with his own eye*, of those who were *absent* from public worship; to attend to the *widows* and the *poor* of his congregation; to seek out all *by name*, and not to overlook even the *men and maid-servants* living in his parish. I appeal to your candour, my brethren, whether these representations and directions can be reasonably applied to any other officer than the pastor of a single church?

2. It is equally evident, that the *presbyters* and *presbytery* so frequently mentioned in the foregoing extracts, together with the *deacons*, refer to officers which, in the days of *Ignatius*, belonged, like the bishop, to each particular church. Most of the epistles of this father are directed to particular churches; and in every case,

\* Accordingly Dr. (afterwards Bishop) *Stillingfleet* declares—"Of all the thirty-five testimonies produced out of *Ignatius* his epistles, for episcopacy, I can meet with but *one* which is brought to prove the *least* semblance of an institution of Christ for episcopacy, and, if I be not much deceived, the sense of that place is clearly *mistaken*." *Irenicum*.

we find each church furnished with a *bishop*, a *presbytery*, and *deacons*. But what kind of officers were these *presbyters*? The friends of prelacy, without hesitation, answer, they were the inferior clergy, who ministered to the several congregations belonging to each of the dioceses mentioned in these epistles; an order of clergy subject to the bishop, empowered to preach, baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper; but having no power to *ordain* or *confirm*. But all this is said without the smallest evidence. On the contrary, the *presbyters* or *presbytery* are represented as always *present*, with the bishop and his congregation, when assembled; as bearing a relation to the same flock equally close and inseparable with its pastor; and as being equally necessary in order to a regular and valid transaction of its affairs. In short, to every *altar*, or *communion table*, there was one *presbytery*, as well as one *bishop*. To suppose then that these presbyters were the *parish priests*, or *rectors* of different congregations, within the diocese to which they belonged, is to disregard every part of the representation which is given respecting them. No; the only rational and probable construction of the language of *Ignatius* is, that each of the particular churches to which he wrote, besides its *pastor* and *deacons*, was furnished with a bench of *elders* or *presbyters*, some of them, probably, ordained to the work of the ministry,\* and therefore empowered to *teach* and administer *ordinances*, as well as *rule*; and others empowered to *rule* only. The whole strain of these epistles, then, may be considered as descriptive of Presbyterian government. They exhibit a number of particular churches, each furnished with a *bishop* or *pastor*, and also with *elders* and *deacons*, to whose respective ministrations every private member is exhorted, as long as they are regular, implicitly to submit.†

\* I say some of these *Elders* were *probably* ordained to the work of the ministry, and of course, empowered to preach and administer ordinances: But this is not certain. They might *all* have been *ruling elders* for aught that appears to the contrary. For in all these epistles, it is no where said that they either preached or dispensed the sacraments. It cannot be shown then, that *Ignatius*, by his *presbyters* and *presbytery*, or *eldership*, means any thing else than a bench of *ruling elders* in each church.

† Every regularly organized Presbyterian church has a *bishop*, *elders*, and *deacons*. Of the bench of *elders*, the *bishop* is the standing *president* or *moderator*. Sometimes, where a congregation is large, it has two or

I have been thus particular in attending to the testimony of *Ignatius*, because the advocates of prelacy have always considered him as more decidedly in their favour than any other father, and have contended for the genuineness of his writings with as much zeal as if the cause of episcopacy were involved in their fate. But you will perceive that these writings, when impartially examined, instead of affording aid to that cause, furnish decisive testimony against it.

*Papias*, bishop of *Hierapolis*, a city of *Asia*, is said to have been "an hearer of *John*, and a companion of *Polycarp*." He flourished about the year 110 or 115. Some fragments of his writings have been preserved. Out of these, the following passage is the only one that I have been able to find, that has any relation to the subject under debate. It is cited by *Eusebius*, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, lib. iii. cap. 39.

"I shall not think it grievous to set down in writing, with my interpretations, the things which I have learned of the *presbyters*, and remember as yet very well, being fully certified of their truth. If I met any where with one who had conversed with the *presbyters*, I inquired after the sayings of the *presbyters*; what *Andrew*, what *Peter*, what *Philip*, what *Thomas*, or *James* had said; what *John*, or *Matthew*, or any other disciples of the

more *bishops*, united in the pastoral charge, and having, in all respects an official equality. When this is the case, each of the bishops is president or moderator of the eldership in turn. In some Presbyterian churches, the *bishop*, instead of having one or more *colleagues*, of equal authority and power with himself, has an *assistant* or *assistants*. These assistants, though clothed with the whole ministerial character, and capable, without any other ordination, of becoming pastors themselves; yet as long as they remain in this situation, they bear a relation to the bishop similar to that which *curates* bear to the *rector*, in some episcopal churches; and of course, cannot regularly baptize or administer the Lord's Supper without the concurrence of the bishop. *Ignatius*, therefore, could scarcely give a more perfect representation than he does of Presbyterian government. And if a modern Presbyterian were about to speak of the officers of his church, and were to use the Greek language as *Ignatius* did, he would almost necessarily say as he did, *ἐπισκόπος, πρεσβύτεροι καὶ διακονοί*. So perfectly futile is the allegation that this language is *decisive* in support of prelacy! It is absolutely in perfect coincidence with our system.



“ Lord were wont to say ; and what *Ariston*, or *John* the *presbyter*, said : for I am of the mind that I could not profit so much “ by reading books, as by attending to those who spake with the “ living voice.”

The only thing remarkable in this passage, is, that the writer, obviously, styles the *apostles*, *presbyters* ; and this when speaking of them, not with the lightness of colloquial familiarity, but as oracles, whose authority he acknowledged, whose character he revered, and whose sayings he treasured up. Could we have more satisfactory evidence that this title, as employed in the primitive church, was not considered as expressing official inferiority in those to whom it was applied ?

*Irenæus*, who was a disciple of *Polycarp*, and who is said to have suffered martyrdom about the year 202 after Christ, is an important and decisive witness on the subject before us. The following passages are found in his writings.

*Book against Heresies, lib. iii. cap. 2.* “ When we challenge “ them (the heretics) to that apostolical tradition which is preserved “ in the churches *through the succession of the presbyters*, they “ oppose the tradition, pretending that they are wiser, not only “ than the *presbyters*, but also than the *apostles*.”

*Lib. iii. cap. 3.* “ The apostolic tradition is present in every “ church. We can enumerate those who were constituted *bishops* “ by the apostles in the churches, and *their successors even to us*, “ who taught no such thing. By showing the tradition and “ declared faith of the greatest and most ancient church of *Rome*, “ which she received from the apostles, and which is come to us “ *through the succession of the bishops*, we confound all who “ conclude otherwise than they ought.”

“ The apostles, founding and instructing that church, (the church “ of *Rome*) delivered to *Linus* the *Episcopate* ; *Anacletus* succeeded him ; after him *Clemens* obtained the *Episcopate* from “ the apostles. To *Clement* succeeded *Evaristus* ; to him *Alexander* ; then *Sixtus* ; and after him *Telesphorus* ; then “ *Hugynus* ; after him *Pius* ; then *Anicetus* ; and when *Soter* had “ succeeded *Anicetus*, then *Eleutherius* had the episcopate in the “ twelfth place. By this appointment and instruction that tradition “ in the church, and publication of the truth, which is from the “ apostles, is come to us.”

“ *Polycarp*, also, who was not only taught by the apostles, and conversed with many of those who had seen our Lord; but was also appointed by the apostles, bishop of the Church of *Smyrna* in *Asia*.”

*Lib. iv. cap. 43.* “Obey those *presbyters* in the Church who have the succession as we have shown from the *Apostles*; who with the succession of the *Episcopate*, received the gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father.”

*Lib. iv. cap. 44.* “We ought, therefore, to adhere to those *presbyters* who keep the *Apostle’s doctrine*, and together with the *presbyterial succession*, do show forth sound speech. Such *presbyters*, the church nourishes; and of such the Prophet says: I will give them *princes* in peace, and *bishops* in righteousness.”\*

*Lib. iv. cap. 53.* “True knowledge is the doctrine of the apostles according to the succession of *bishops*, to whom they delivered the church in every place, which doctrine hath reached us preserved in its most full delivery.”

*Lib. v. cap. 20.* “These are far later than the *bishops* to whom the apostles delivered the churches: and this we have carefully made manifest in the third book.”

*Epistle to Victor*, then Bishop of *Rome*.† “Those *presbyters*

\* It will be observed that *Clemens*, in a preceding page, applies this text to the *bishops* constituted by the apostles. *Irenæus* here applies it to *presbyters*, whom he represents as receiving and conveying the *apostolic succession*.

† *Eusebius* tells us, that the occasion on which *Irenæus* wrote this letter to *Victor*, then bishop of *Rome*, was as follows. A dispute had arisen about the proper time of celebrating *Easter*. In this dispute, the churches of *Asia* took one side, and the western churches another. Both sides declared that they had the most decided apostolical authority in their favour: the former pleading the authority of *John* and *Philip*; and the latter with equal confidence, adducing *Peter* and *Paul* in justification of their practice. In the progress of this dispute, *Victor*, bishop of the Romish church, issued letters proscribing the churches of *Asia*, and the neighbouring provinces, and endeavouring to cut them off from the communion of the faithful. Upon this occasion *Irenæus* addressed to him the letter in question, showing him the imprudence and injustice of the step which he had taken. *Eccles. Hist. 1. lib. v. cap. 24.* These facts show, 1. That even in the second century Christians began

“ before *Soter*, who governed the church which thou, *Victor*, now “ governest, (the church of Rome) I mean *Anicetus*, *Pius*, *Hugynus*, *Telesphorus*, and *Sixtus*, they did not observe it; (he is “ speaking of the day of keeping *Easter*) and those *presbyters* “ who preceded you, though they did not observe it themselves, “ yet sent the Eucharist to those of other churches who did observe it. And when blessed *Polycarp*, in the days of *Anicetus*, “ came to Rome, he did not much persuade *Anicetus* to observe it, “ as he (*Anicetus*) declared that the custom of the *Presbyters* who “ were his predecessors should be retained.”

*Epistle to Florinus*. “ This doctrine, to speak most cautiously “ and gently, is not sound. This doctrine disagreeeth with the “ church, and bringeth such as listen to it into extreme impiety.” (And having mentioned *Polycarp*, and said some things of him, he proceeds:) “ I am able to testify before God, that if that “ holy and apostolical *presbyter* had heard any such thing, he “ would at once have exclaimed, as his manner was, “ Good God ! “ into what times hast thou reserved me !”

The foregoing extracts comprise the strongest passages, in the writings of *Irenæus* that bear on the subject before us. And I take for granted that no impartial reader can cast his eye on them without perceiving how strongly and unequivocally they support our doctrine. This father not only applies the names *bishop* and *presbyter* to the same persons, but he does it in a way which precludes all doubt that he considers them as only different titles for the same office. That regular *succession* from the Apostles which in one place he ascribes to *bishops*, he in another expressly ascribes to *presbyters*. Nay, he explicitly declares that *presbyters* received the succession of the *Episcopate*. Those ministers whom he mentions by name as having presided in the church of Rome,

to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. 2. That even so near the apostolic age, the authority of the *apostles* was confidently quoted in favour of *opposite* opinions and practices, plainly showing, how little reliance, in religious controversies, is to be placed on any testimony excepting that of the written word of God. 3. That as early as the time of *Irenæus*, the principal *pastor* or bishop of the church of Rome had begun to usurp that pre-eminence, which afterwards attained such a wonderful height; and which all protestants allow to be totally unscriptural and antichristian.

viz. *Linus, Anacletus, Clemens, &c.* and whom he in one instance calls *Bishops*, he in another denominates *presbyters*. In one paragraph he speaks of the apostolic *doctrine* as handed down *through the succession of bishops*; in another, he as positively affirms that the same apostolic doctrine is handed down *through the succession of presbyters*. In short, the *apostolical succession*, the *Episcopal succession*, and the *presbyterial succession*, are interchangeably ascribed to the *same persons*, and expressly represented as the *same thing*. What could be more conclusive? If this venerable father had been taking pains to show that he employed the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* as different titles for the office, he could scarcely have kept a more scrupulous and exact balance between the dignities, powers, and duties connected with each title, and ascribed interchangeably to both.

But much is made by the friends of prelacy of that portion of the foregoing extracts in which *Irenæus* speaks of the *succession* in particular churches as flowing through *single individuals*; whereas there were, doubtless, a number of presbyters in each of the churches to which he refers. "Why," say they, "single out *Linus, Anacletus, &c.* in the church of *Rome*, when there were "probably many contemporaneous presbyters in that church?" The answer is obvious and easy. One of the presbyters was, no doubt, the *pastor*, or *president*, and the others his assistants. This has often happened in Presbyterian churches, both in ancient and modern times. And surely a *succession* may flow as properly and perfectly through a series of *pastors* as of *prelates*. This at once illustrates and harmonizes all that *Irenæus* has said.

The testimony of *Justin Martyr*, who also lived in the second century, comes next in order. In describing the mode of worship adopted by the Christians in his day, says, "Prayers being ended, bread and a cup of water and wine are then brought to the *president of the brethren*, and he, receiving them, offers praise and "glory to the Father of all things through the name of the "Son and the Holy Spirit: and he is long in giving thanks, for "that we are thought worthy of these blessings. When he has "ended prayer, and giving of thanks, the whole people present "signify their approbation by saying, *amen*. The *president* "having given thanks, and the whole people having expressed "their approbation, those that are called among us *deacons*,

“ distribute to every one of those that are present, that they may  
 “ partake of the bread and wine and water, for which thanks have  
 “ been given ; and to those that are not present, they carry.”  
 And again, a little afterwards, he tells us, “ Upon Sunday, all  
 “ those who live in cities and country-towns, or villages belonging  
 “ to them, meet together, and the writings of the apostles and  
 “ prophets are read, as the time will allow. And the reader being  
 “ silent, (or having ended) the *president* delivers a discourse,  
 “ instructing and exhorting to an imitation of those things that are  
 “ comely. We then all rise up, and pour out prayers. And, as  
 “ we have related, prayers being ended, bread and wine and water  
 “ are brought, and the *president*, as above, gives thanks *accord-*  
 “ *ing to his ability* ;\* and the people signify their approbation,  
 “ saying, *amen*. Distribution and communication is then made to  
 “ every one that has joined in giving thanks ; and to those that  
 “ are absent it is sent by the Deacons. And those that are  
 “ wealthy and willing, contribute according to their pleasure.  
 “ What is collected is deposited in the hands of the *president*, and  
 “ he helps the orphans and widows, those that are in want by  
 “ reason of sickness, or any other cause ; those that are in bonds,  
 “ and that come strangers from abroad. He is the kind guardian  
 “ of all that are in want. We all assemble on *Sunday*, because  
 “ God, dispelling the darkness and informing the first matter,  
 “ created the world ; and also because, upon that day, Jesus Christ  
 “ our Saviour rose from the dead.” *Apol.* 1. p. 95—97.

It is generally agreed, by Episcopal writers as well as others, that the officer several times mentioned in these extracts from *Justin Martyr*, viz. the *president*, was the *bishop* of the church, whose public service is described. Now as this venerable father

\* This passage is one among numerous testimonies with which antiquity abounds, that there were no *Forms of Prayer* used in the primitive church. Each *pastor* or *bishop* led the devotions of his congregation according to his ability. For the first three hundred years after Christ, no trace of prescribed *liturgies* is to be found. The *liturgies* which go under the names of *Peter*, *Mark*, *James*, *Clement*, and *Basil*, have been given up as forgeries, even by the most respectable Episcopal writers. See *A Discourse concerning Liturgies*, by the Rev. *David Clarkson*, a Presbyterian minister of England, the venerable ancestor of the family of that name in this city.

is obviously describing the manner in which each particular congregation conducted its worship in his day, it follows, that in the time of *Justin*, every congregation had its *bishop*: or, in other words, that this was a title applied in primitive times to the ordinary pastors of particular churches.

The testimony of *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who flourished at the close of the second century, is likewise in favour of our doctrine concerning the christian ministry. *Clement* was a *presbyter* of the church in *Alexandria*, and a prodigy of learning in his day. The following extracts from his writings will enable you to judge in what light he ought to be considered as a witness on this subject.

*Pædagog. lib. 1.* “We who have rule over the churches, are shepherds or pastors, after the image of the Good Shepherd.” *Ibid. lib. iii.* In proof of the impropriety of women wearing foreign hair, among other arguments he uses this, “On whom, or what will the *presbyter* impose his hand? To whom or what will he give his blessing? Not to the woman who is adorned, but to strange locks of hair, and through them to another’s head.” *Ibid.* “Many other commands, appertaining to select persons, are written in the sacred books; some to *presbyters*, some to *bishops*, some to *deacons*, and some to widows.”

*Stromat. lib. i.* “Just so in the church, the *presbyters* are intrusted with the dignified ministry; the *deacons* with the subordinate.” *Ibid. lib. iii.* Having cited the apostolic directions concerning marriage, in 1 *Tim. v. 14.* &c. he adds, “But he must be the husband of one wife only, whether he be a *presbyter*, or *deacon*, or layman, if he would use matrimony without reprehension.” Again—“What can they say to these things who inveigh against marriage? Since the apostle enjoins, that the bishop to be set over the church be one who rules his own house well.” *Ibid. lib. vi.* “This man is in reality a *presbyter*, and a true *deacon* of the purpose of God—not ordained of men, nor because a *presbyter*, therefore esteemed a righteous man; but because a righteous man, therefore now reckoned in the *presbytery*; and though here upon earth he hath not been honoured with the chief seat, yet he shall sit down among the four and twenty thrones, judging the people, as *John* says in the Revelation.” Again, *Ibid.* “Now in the church here, the progres-



“ sions of *bishops, presbyters, deacons*, I deem to be imitations of  
 “ the evangelical glory, and of that dispensation which the Scrip-  
 “ tures tell us they look for, who following the steps of the apos-  
 “ tles, have lived according to the Gospel in the perfection of  
 “ righteousness. These men, the apostle writes, being taken up  
 “ into the clouds, shall first minister as *deacons*, then be admitted  
 “ to a rank in the *presbytery*, according to the progression in  
 “ glory: for glory differeth from glory, until they grow up to a  
 “ perfect man.” Again—“ Of that service of God about which  
 “ men are conversant, one is that which *makes them better*: the  
 “ other *ministerial*. In like manner in the church, the *presbyters*  
 “ retain the form of that kind which makes men better; and the  
 “ *deacons* that which is ministerial. In both these ministries, the  
 “ angels serve God in the dispensation of earthly things.” Again,  
 in his book, *Quis dives salvandus sit*, he has the following singular  
 passage: “ Hear a fable, and yet not a fable, but a true story  
 “ reported of *John* the apostle, delivered to us, and kept in  
 “ memory. After the death of the tyrant, when he (*John*) had  
 “ returned to *Ephesus*, out of the isle of *Patmos*, being desired, he  
 “ went to the neighbouring nations, where he appointed *bishops*,  
 “ where he set in order whole cities, and where he chose by lot  
 “ unto the ecclesiastical function, of those who had been pointed  
 “ out by the Spirit as by name. When he was come to a certain  
 “ city, not far distant, the name of which some mention, and  
 “ among other things had refreshed the brethren; beholding a  
 “ young man of a portly body, a gracious countenance, and fervent  
 “ mind, he looked upon the *bishop*, who was set over all, and said,  
 “ I commit this young man to thy custody, in presence of the  
 “ church, and Christ bearing me witness. When he had received  
 “ the charge, and promised the performance of all things relative  
 “ to it, *John* again urged, and made protestation of the same  
 “ thing; and afterwards departed to *Ephesus*. And the *presbyter*,  
 “ taking the young man, brought him to his own house, nourished,  
 “ comforted, and cherished him; and at length baptized him.”

From these extracts you will perceive, that *Clement*, though a  
 presbyter of the church of *Alexandria*, speaks of himself as one of  
 its *governors*, and claims the title of a “ *shepherd or pastor*, after  
 the image of the good Shepherd,” a title which the greater part of  
 episcopal writers acknowledge to have been given in the primitive

church to the highest order of ministers. He represents the *presbyters* as intrusted with the *dignified ministry*, and the *deacons* with the *subordinate*, without suggesting any thing of a *more dignified* order. He applies the apostolic direction in 1 Tim. ii. 4. in one place to *bishops* and in another to *presbyters*, which would have no pertinency if he did not refer in both cases to the same order of ministers. He compares the grades of church officers with the orders of *angels*; but we read only of *angels* and *archangels*. It is observable also, that the person to whom *John* committed the young man, is in one place called a *bishop*, and immediately afterwards a *presbyter*, which we cannot suppose would have been done, had the superiority of order, for which prelatists contend, been known in his day. It is further supposed by some, that when *Clement* speaks of *imposition of hands* on the heads of those females who wore false hair, he alludes to the rite of *Confirmation*. If this be so, which is extremely doubtful, it is the first hint we have, in all antiquity, of this rite being practised; but, unfortunately for the Episcopal cause, the imposition of hands here mentioned, is ascribed to *presbyters*. "On whom or what will the *presbyter* impose his hands?" From these circumstances, we may confidently infer, that *Clement* knew nothing of an order of *bishops*, distinct from and superior to *presbyters*, and that the purity of the apostolic age was not, when he wrote, in this respect, materially corrupted.

It is readily granted, that this father once speaks of "*bishops*, "*presbyters*, and *deacons*," and once more, inverting the order, of "*presbyters*, *bishops*, and *deacons*," He also represents these as "progressions which imitate the angelic glory," and refers to the "chief seat in the presbytery." But none of these modes of expression afford the least countenance to the Episcopal doctrine. He no where tells us that there was any difference of *order*, in his day, between *bishops* and *presbyters*; and far less does he convey any hint, that only the former *ordained* and *confirmed*. He says nothing of either of these rites, directly and indirectly, in any of his works. And when the friends of Episcopacy suppose, that the mere use of the words *bishop* and *presbyters*, establishes their claim, they only adopt the convenient method of taking the point in dispute for granted, without a shadow of proof. If we suppose the *bishop*, alluded to by *Clement*, to be the pastor of the church,

the president or presiding presbyter, and the other presbyters to be his *assistants*, it will account for the strongest expressions above recited, and will entirely agree with the language of scripture, and of all the preceding fathers.

I have now gone through the testimony of those fathers who lived and wrote within the first *two centuries* after Christ,\* the limits which I prescribed to myself at the beginning of this letter. And I can solemnly assure you, my brethren, that the foregoing extracts, besides what I have deemed favourable to our own cause, also contain, to the best of my knowledge and belief, *the strongest passages* that are to be found, within that period, in support of diocesan Episcopacy. I may confidently challenge the most zealous Episcopalian to produce, out of the writers of those times, a single sentence which speaks more *fully* or *decidedly* in favour of his system, than those which have been presented. If there be any such, I have not been so fortunate as to meet with them; nor have the ablest Episcopal writers with whom I have been conversant, appeared to know of their existence. You have before you, not merely a *specimen* of those quotations which they consider as most favourable to their cause, but in fact, the strongest and best passages for their purpose, that they are able to produce.

Let me, then, appeal to your candour, whether the assertions made at the beginning of this letter, are not fully supported. Have you seen a single passage which proves that Christian *Bishops*, within the first two centuries, were, in fact, an order of clergy distinct from those *presbyters* who were authorized to preach and administer sacraments, and superior to them? Have you seen a sentence which furnishes even probable testimony, that these *bishops* received, as such, a new and superior ordination; that each *bishop* had under him a number of congregations with their pastors, whom he governed; and that with this superior order

\* The well informed reader will observe, that I have taken no notice of certain writings, called the *Apostolical Canons*, and the *Apostolical Constitutions*, which have been sometimes quoted in this controversy. They are so generally considered as altogether unworthy of credit, that I deem no apology necessary for this omission. When Episcopal writers of the greatest eminence style them "impudent forgeries," and their author "a cheat, unworthy of credit," I may well be excused for passing them by

exclusively was deposited the power of ordination? Have you found even *plausible* evidence in support of any *one* of these articles of Episcopal belief? Above all, have you found a *syllable* which *intimates* that these were not only *facts*, but also that they were deemed of so much importance as to be essential to the very existence of the church? Even supposing you had found such declarations in *some* or *all* of the early fathers; what then? *Historic fact* is not *Divine institution*. But have you found the *fact*? I will venture to say, you have not. We are so far from being told by the writers within this period, "with one voice," that *bishops* are a superior order to preaching *presbyters*, that not *one* among them says *any thing like it*. Instead of finding them "unanimously," and "constantly" declaring that the right of *ordination* is exclusively vested in *bishops* as a superior order, we cannot find a *single passage* in which such information, or any thing that resembles it, is conveyed. And, with respect to *confirmation*, which is claimed as one of the appropriate duties of the diocesan bishop, it is not so much as *once mentioned* by any authentic writer, within the first two hundred years, as a ceremony which was *in use at all*,\* and much less as appropriated to a particular order of clergy.

On the contrary, we have seen that these writers, with remarkable uniformity, apply the terms *bishop*, *president*, *shepherd*, *pastor*, interchangeably to the same officers; that the *apostolical succession* is expressly ascribed to *presbyters*; that a *bishop* is represented as performing duties which would involve absurdity on any other supposition than that of his being the *pastor* of a *single flock*; and that in all cases in which any distinction is made between *bishops* and *presbyters*, it evidently points out, either the distinction between *preaching* and *ruling* presbyters; or that between those who were fixed *pastors* of churches, and those who, though in full orders, and of the same rank, had no pastoral charge, and until they obtained such a place, acted the part of *assistants* to pastors. In short, when the testimony of the early fathers is thoroughly sifted, it will be found to yield nothing to the Episcopal cause but simply

\* Unless the doubtful passage before quoted from *Clement Alexandrinus*, may be supposed to refer to this rite: and if so, then it will follow, from that passage, that, in the days of *Clemens*, *presbyters* confirmed.

the title *bishop*. Now when the advocates of Episcopacy find this title in the New Testament evidently applied to *presbyters*, they gravely tell us that the mere *title* is nothing, and that the *interchange* of these titles is nothing, but that immediately after the apostolic age, the title of bishop became appropriated to the higher order. But when we find precisely the *same titles* in the early fathers, and the same *interchange* of these titles, they are compelled either to alter their tone, and to abandon their former reasoning, or else to submit to the mortification of being condemned out of their own mouths.

The friends of prelacy have often, and with much apparent confidence, challenged us to produce out of all the early fathers, a single instance of an *ordination* performed by *presbyters*. Those who give this challenge might surely be expected, in all decency and justice, to have a case of *Episcopal* ordination ready to be brought forward, from the same venerable records. But have they ever produced such a case? They have not. Nor can they produce it. As there is, unquestionably, no instance mentioned in scripture of any person, with the title of *bishop*, performing an ordination; so it is equally certain that no such instance has yet been found in any christian writer within the *first two centuries*. Nor can a single instance be produced of a person already ordained as a *presbyter*, receiving a new and second ordination as *bishop*. To find a precedent favourable to their doctrine, the advocates of Episcopacy have been under the necessity of wandering into periods when the simplicity of the Gospel had, in a considerable degree, given place to the devices of men; and when the *man of sin* had commenced that system of unhallowed usurpation, which which for so many centuries corrupted and degraded the church of God.

Such is the result of the appeal to the early fathers. They are so far from giving even a semblance of support to the Episcopal claim, that, like the Scriptures, they every where speak a language wholly inconsistent with it, and favourable only to the doctrine of ministerial parity. What then shall we say of the assertions so often and so confidently made, that the doctrine of a superior order of *bishops* has been maintained in the church, "from the earliest ages," in "the ages immediately succeeding the apostles," and

by "all the fathers, from the beginning?" What shall we say of the assertion, that the Scriptures, *interpreted* by the writings of the *early fathers*, decidedly support the same doctrine? I will only say, that those who find themselves able to justify such assertions, must have been much more successful in discovering early authorities in aid of their cause, than the most diligent, learned, and keen-sighted of their predecessors.



## LETTER V.

## TESTIMONY OF SOME OF THE LATER FATHERS.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN citing the fathers, it was necessary to draw a distinct line between those who are to be admitted as credible witnesses, and those whose testimony is to be suspected. I have accordingly drawn this line at the close of the second century. About this time as will be afterwards shown, among many other corruptions, that of clerical imparity appeared in the church; and even the Papacy, as we have before seen, had begun to urge its anti-christian claims. From the commencement of the third century, therefore, every witness on the subject of Episcopacy is to be received with caution. As it is granted, on all hands, that the *mystery of iniquity* had then *begun to work*: as great and good men are known, from this time to have countenanced important errors, errors acknowledged to be such by Episcopalians as well as ourselves: as uncommanded rites and forms, both of Jewish and Pagan origin, began to be introduced into Christian worship, and to have a stress laid upon them as unreasonable as it was unwarranted; we are compelled to examine the writers from the commencement of the third century downwards, with the jealousy which we feel towards men who stand convicted of having departed from the simplicity of the gospel; and concerning some of whom it is perfectly well known, that many of their alleged *facts* are as false as their *principles*.

But though the fathers from the beginning of the third century are not to be contemplated with the same respect, nor relied upon with the same confidence as their predecessors; still they deserve much attention; and in the perusal of their writings, we shall find many passages which confirm the doctrine and the statements exhibited in the foregoing pages. We shall sometimes, indeed, meet with modes of expression and occasional hints, which indicate that the love of pre-eminence, which has so much disturbed

the church as well as the state, had begun to form into a system its plans and claims. Not a sentence, however, can be found until the fourth century, which gives any intimation that *bishops* were considered as a different order from *presbyters*; or that the former were peculiarly invested with the *ordaining* power. Let us then inquire in what manner some of these later fathers speak on the subject under consideration.

*Tertullian* began to flourish about the year 200. His writings are voluminous, and their authenticity is generally admitted. And though he has been often quoted by our opponents in this controversy, as a witness favourable to their cause, yet if I mistake not, a little attention to the few hints which he drops on this subject, will show that his testimony is directly of an opposite kind. The following passages are found in his works.

*Apolog.* "In our religious assemblies certain approved *elders* *preside*, who have obtained their office by merit and not by "bribes." *De Corona.* "We receive the sacrament of the Lord's "Supper from the hands of none but the *presidents* of our assem- "blies." In the same work, *cap.* 3. he informs us, that the Chris- tians among whom he dwelt, were in the habit of receiving the Lord's Supper *three times in each week*, viz. on *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, as well as on the *Lord's days*. *Ibid.* "Before we go "to the water to be baptized, we first in the church under the "hand of the *president*, profess to renounce the devil." *De Baptismo.* "It remains that I remind you of the custom of "giving and receiving baptism. The right of giving this ordi- "nance belong to the highest priest, who is the *bishop*; then "to *elders* and *deacons*; yet not without the authority of the "bishop, for the sake of the honour of the church. This being "secured, peace is secured; otherwise, even the *laity* have the "right." He then goes on to observe, that although the laity have the right of baptizing in cases of *necessity*, yet "that they "ought to be modest, and not to assume to themselves the ap- "pointed office of the *bishop*. *De Hæretic.* "Let them (the "heretics) produce the original of their churches; let them turn "over the roll of their bishops; so running down in a continued "succession, that their first bishop had some one of the apostles, "or of the apostolic men (who persevered with the apostles) for his "author and predecessor. Thus the apostolical churches have

“ their rolls, as the church of *Smyrna* has *Polycarp* constituted  
 “ there by *John*, and the church of *Rome*, *Clement* ordained by  
 “ *Peter*. And the other churches can tell who were ordained  
 “ bishops over them by the apostles, and who have been their suc-  
 “ cessors to this day.

These quotations are the strongest that Episcopalians produce from *Tertullian* in support of their system. Let us examine them. This father tells us, that in his day, *presbyters* *presided* in their assemblies; that the *presidents* of their assemblies *alone*, in ordinary cases, *baptized*; and that they received the Lord's Supper from no other hands but those of the *presidents*: and at the same time he informs us, that administering *baptism* is the appropriate right of the *highest Priest*, who is the *bishop*. What are we to infer from this representation, but that *presbyter*, *president*, and *bishop*, are employed by *Tertullian* as titles of the same men? Again; this father, while he declares that each *bishop* or *president* performed all the baptisms for his flock, and that they received the eucharist from *no other* hands than his, mentions that they were in the habit of attending on the eucharist *three times in each week*. Now the man who performed every baptism in the church under his care, and who administered the Lord's Supper three times every week to all the members of his church, could only have been the pastor of one congregation. To suppose that any minister, however great his activity and zeal, could statedly perform this service for more than a single church, involves a manifest impossibility. Nor is this all: *absurdity* is added to *impossibility*, by supposing, as Episcopalians must, that the *bishop* did all this when he had many *presbyters* under him, who were all invested by the very nature of their office, with the power of administering both sacraments as well as himself.

But it will be asked—why then is the *bishop* called by *Tertullian* the *highest Priest*? Does not this expression indicate that there was *one* priest in a church, at that time, who had some kind of *superiority* over the *other* priests of the same church? I answer, this expression implies no superiority of *order*. The *highest priest* might have been the only *pastor* of the church; nor is there any thing in the title inconsistent with this supposition. To draw a conclusion either in favour of diocesan Episcopacy, or against it, from language so entirely ambiguous in its import, is surely more

calculated to expose the weakness than to exhibit the strength of the cause in which it is adduced. Besides ; *Tertullian* informs us that this *bishop*, or *highest priest*, was *alone* invested with the right of *baptizing* and administering the *Lord's Supper* ; that the *bishop* might, when he thought proper, empower *elders* and *deacons* to *baptize* ; and that even *private Christians*, who bore no office in the church, might also baptize in cases of *necessity*. But still he declares that administering baptism was "the appointed office of the bishop," and that they received the Lord's Supper from *no other hands* than his. Either, then, *Tertullian* writes in a very confused and contradictory manner, or else both the *bishop* and *elders* mentioned by him are officers of a very different character from those who are distinguished by the same titles in modern Episcopal churches. His *highest priest* was evidently no other than the *pastor* of a single congregation ; the *president* of the assembly, and of the *presbytery* or *eldership*, which belonged, like himself, to a particular church.

With respect to the passage quoted above, in which this father speaks of "the roll of *bishops*," and of the line of *bishops* running down in a *continual succession*, it is nothing to the purpose of those who adduce it to support diocesan Episcopacy. What *kind* of *bishops* were those of whom *Tertullian* here speaks ? were they *parochial* or *diocesan* ? If we consider them, as other passages in his writings compel us to consider them, as the *pastors* of single congregations, then the obvious construction of the passage is perfectly agreeable to Presbyterian principles. But, what establishes this construction is, that *Irenæus*, who was nearly contemporary with *Tertullian*, in a passage quoted in a preceding page, in a similar appeal to the *heretics*, speaks of the list or roll of *presbyters*, and represents the *apostolical succession* as flowing through the line of *presbyters* ; an incontestible proof that the words *bishop* and *presbyter* were used by both these fathers, as convertible titles for the same office.

*Cyprian*, the venerable bishop of *Carthage*, who flourished and wrote about the year 250, is often quoted by Episcopal writers as a strong witness in their favour. The following quotations will show in what light his testimony ought to be viewed. *Epist.* 73. "Whence we understand, that it is lawful for none but the *presidents* of the church to *baptize* and grant remission of sins."

And again, *Epist.* 67. “The people should not flatter themselves  
 “that they are free from fault, when they communicate with a  
 “sinful *priest*, and give their consent to the *presidency* of a wicked  
 “*bishop*. Wherefore a *flock* that is obedient to God’s commands,  
 “and fears him, ought to separate from a wicked *bishop*, and not  
 “to join in the sacrifices of a sacrilegious *priest*; since the flock  
 “or people has the chief power of choosing worthy *priests* and  
 “refusing unworthy ones, which we see comes down to us from  
 “divine authority, that the *priest* should be chosen in the presence  
 “of the flock, and in the sight of all, that he may be approved as  
 “worthy and fit, by the judgment and testimony of all. This is  
 “observed, according to divine authority, in the *Acts of the Apos-*  
 “*tles*, when *Peter*, speaking to the people concerning the ordination  
 “a *bishop* in the place of *Judas*; it is said *Peter* rose up in the  
 “midst of the disciples, the whole multitude being met together.  
 “And we may take notice that the apostles observed this, not only  
 “in the ordination of bishops and priests, but also of deacons,  
 “concerning whom it is written in the *Acts*, that the twelve gathered  
 “together the whole multitude of the disciples, and said unto  
 “them, &c. which was, therefore, so diligently and carefully  
 “transacted before all the people, lest any unworthy person should,  
 “by secret arts, creep into the ministry of the altar, or the sacer-  
 “dotal station. This, therefore, is to be observed and held as  
 “founded on divine tradition and apostolic practice; which is also  
 “kept up with us, and almost in all the provinces, that in order to  
 “the right performance of *ordination*, the neighbouring *bishops* of  
 “the same province meet with that *flock* to which the *bishop* is  
 “ordained, and that the *bishop* be chosen in presence of the people,  
 “who know every one’s life, and are acquainted with their whole  
 “conversation. Which we see was done by you in the ordination  
 “of *Sabinus*, our colleague, that the *Episcopacy* was conferred on  
 “him by the suffrage of the whole brotherhood, and of the *bishops*  
 “who were met there, and wrote to you concerning him.”

*Epist.* 32. “Through all the vicissitudes of time, the ordination  
 “of *bishops*, and the constitution of the church, are so handed  
 “down, that the church is built on the *bishops*, and every act of  
 “the church is ordered and managed by them. Seeing, therefore,  
 “this is founded on the law of God, I wonder that some should be  
 “so rash and insolent as to write to me in the name of the church,

"seeing a church consists of a bishop, clergy, and all that stand faithful."

*Tract. De Unitat. Eccles.* "Our Lord speaks to Peter, I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, &c. Upon one he builds his church; and though he gave an equal power to all his apostles, yet that he might manifest unity, he ordered the beginning of that unity to proceed from one person. The rest of the apostles were the same that Peter was, being endued with the same fellowship both of honour and power. But the beginning proceeds from unity, that the church may be shown to be one."

*Epist. 3.* "The deacons ought to remember, that the Lord hath chosen apostles, that is, bishops and presidents; but the apostles constituted deacons, as the ministers of their Episcopacy and of the church."

These extracts are remarkable. Though they are precisely those which Episcopalians generally adduce from *Cyprian* in support of their cause; yet the discerning reader will perceive that all their force lies against that cause. It is evident from these extracts, that *bishop* and *president* are used by this father as words of the same import; that the officer thus denominated was the only one who had the power of administering baptism; that the *bishop* in *Cyprian's* days was chosen by the people of his charge, was ordained over a particular flock, and received his ordination in the presence of that flock. All these circumstances agree perfectly with the Presbyterian doctrine, that the bishop is the pastor of a single congregation; but wear a most unnatural and improbable aspect when applied to a diocesan bishop, having a number of flocks or congregations with their pastors, under his care.

It is readily granted, that *Cyprian* speaks of the church of Carthage as having several presbyters or elders as well as deacons, and that he distinguishes between presbyters of that church and himself their bishop. But how many of these were ruling elders, and how many were empowered to teach and administer sacraments, as well as to rule; and in what respects he differed from the other presbyters, whether only as a standing chairman or president among them, as seems to be intimated by his calling them repeatedly his colleagues or co-presbyters, we are nowhere informed. All we know is, that writing to them in his exile, he



requests them, during his absence, to perform *his duties* as well as *their own* ; which looks as if *Cyprian* considered the presbyters of his church as clothed with full power to perform all those acts which were incumbent on him as *bishop*, and consequently as of the *same order* with himself.

Again ; when *Cyprian* speaks of the church as “being built on the bishops,” and of all the acts of the church as being managed by by them, Episcopalians hastily triumph, as if this were decided testimony in their favour. But their triumph is premature. Does *Cyprian*, in these passages, refer to *diocesan* or *parochial* bishops ? To *prelates*, who had the government of a diocese, containing a number of congregations and their ministers ; or to *pastors* of single flocks ? The latter, from the whole strain of his epistles, is evidently his meaning. He no where gives the least hint of having more than one congregation under his own care. He represents his whole church as ordinarily *joining together* in the celebration of the eucharist. He declares his resolution to do nothing without the council of his *elders*, and the consent of his *flock*. He affirms that every church, when properly organized, consists of a *bishop*, *clergy*, and the *brotherhood*. All these representations apply only to *parochial*, and by no means to *diocesan* Episcopacy. For if such officers belong to *every church*, or organized religious society, then we must conclude that by the *clergy* of each church, as distinguished from the *bishop*, is meant those *elders* who assisted the pastor in the discharge of parochial duty. It is well known that *Cyprian* applies the term *clergy* to all sorts of church officers. In his epistles, not only the presbyters, or elders, but also the *deacons*, *sub-deacons*, *readers* and *acolyths* are all spoken of as belonging to the *clergy*. The ordination of such persons, (for it seems in his time they were all formally ordained) he calls *ordinationes clericæ* ; and the letters which he transmitted by them, he styles *literæ clericæ*. The same fact may be clearly established from the writings of *Ambrose*, *Hilary* and *Epiphanius*, and also from the canons of the council of Nice. When *Cyprian*, then, speaks of a church, when properly organized, as consisting of a *bishop*, *clergy*, and *brotherhood*, he not only speaks a language which is strictly reconcilable with Presbyterian church government ; but which can scarcely be reconciled with any thing else. For it is alone descriptive of a *pastor* or *overseer* of a single

church, with his *elders* and *deacons* to assist in their appropriate functions. But there is one passage in the above cited extracts, which completely establishes the position, that *Cyprian* considered *bishops* and preaching *presbyters* as of the *same order*. He recognizes the same kind of pre-eminence in *bishops* over *presbyters*, as *Peter* had over the *other apostles*. But of what nature was this superiority? He shall speak for himself. "The rest of the apostles," says he, "were the same that *Peter* was, being endued with the same fellowship, *both of honour and power*; but the beginning proceeds from unity, that the church may be shown to be one." In other words, every bishop is of the *same order* with those *presbyters* who labour in the word and doctrine: and only holds, in consequence of his being vested with a *pastoral* charge, the distinction of *president* or *chairman* among them. That I do not mistake *Cyprian's* meaning, you will readily be persuaded, when I inform you that Mr. Dodwell, that learned and able advocate for Episcopacy, expressly acknowledges, that *Cyprian* makes *Peter* the type of every *bishop*, and the *rest of the apostles* the type of every *presbyter*.

*Firmilian*, bishop of *Cesarea*, who was contemporary with *Cyprian*, in an epistle addressed to the latter, has the following passage. *Cyprian. Epist. 75.* "But the other heretics also, if they separate from the church, can have no power or grace, since all power and grace are placed in the church, where *Presbyters* preside, in whom is vested the power of baptizing and imposition of hands, and *ordination*." This passage needs no comment. It not only represents the right to *baptize* and the right to *ordain* as going together; but it also expressly ascribes both to the *elders* who preside in the churches.

The testimony of *Jerome* on this subject is remarkably explicit and decisive. This distinguished father, who flourished about the year 380, and who was acknowledged by the whole Christian world to be one of the most pious and learned men of his day,\* does not merely convey his opinion in *indirect* terms and occasional *hints*, as most of the preceding fathers had done, but in the

\* The celebrated *Erasmus* declared concerning *Jerome*, that "he was, without controversy, the most learned of all Christians, the prince of divines, and for eloquence that he excelled *Cicero*."

most *express* and *formal* manner. In his *Commentary* on *Titus* we find the following passage. "Let us diligently attend to the words of the apostle, saying, *That thou mayest ordain elders in every city, as I have appointed thee.* Who discoursing in what follows, what sort of presbyter is to be ordained, saith, *If any one be blameless, the husband of one wife, &c.* afterwards adds, *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, &c.* A *presbyter*, therefore, is the same as a *bishop*; and before there were, by the devil's instinct, parties in religion, and it was said among the people, *I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas,\** the churches were governed by the common council of presbyters. But *afterwards*, when every one thought that those whom he baptized were rather his than Christ's, it was determined through the whole world, that one of the presbyters should be set above the rest, to whom all care of the church should belong, that the seeds of schism might be taken away. If any suppose that it is merely *our* opinion, and not that of the Scriptures, that bishop and presbyter are the same, and that one is the name of *age*, the other of *office*, let him read the words of the apostles to the *Philippians*, saying, *Paul and Timothy, the*

\* Some Episcopal writers have attempted, from this allusion of *Jerome* to 1 *Cor.* i. 12, to infer that he dates Episcopacy as early as the dispute at *Corinth*, to which this passage refers. But this inference is effectually refuted by two considerations. In the *first* place *Jerome* adduces proof that *bishop* and *presbyter* were originally the same, from portions of the New Testament which were certainly written *after* the first epistle to the *Corinthians*. In the *second* place, that language of the apostle, *one saith I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, &c.* has been familiarly applied in every age, by way of allusion, to *actual* divisions in the church. And were those who put the construction on *Jerome* which I am opposing, a little better acquainted with his writings, they would know that in another place he himself applies the same passage to some disturbers of the church's peace in the *fourth* century. Suppose any one were describing a division in a church in the nineteenth century, and were to say, as has been said a thousand times since the days of *Paul*, "They are all at strife, one saying, 'I am of *Paul*, and another I am of *Apollos*, &c.'" how would he be understood? as referring to that Scripture by way of *allusion*, or as meaning to say that the division which he described, took place in the days of *Paul*?

“ the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus  
 “ that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Philippi is  
 “ a city of Macedonia, and certainly, in one city there could not  
 “ be more than one bishop, as they are now styled. But at that  
 “ time they called the same men *bishops* whom they called *presby-*  
 “ *ters*; therefore, he speaks indifferently of bishops as of presby-  
 “ ters. This may seem even yet, doubtful to some, till it be proved  
 “ by another testimony. It is written in the Acts of the Apostles,  
 “ that when the apostle came to Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and  
 “ and called the presbyters of that church, to whom, among other  
 “ things, he said, Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over  
 “ whom the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church  
 “ of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. Here  
 “ observe diligently, that calling together the presbyters of one  
 “ city, Ephesus, he afterwards styles the same persons bishops.  
 “ If any will receive that epistle which is written in the name of  
 “ Paul to the Hebrews, there also the care of the church is equally  
 “ divided among many, since he writes to the people, Obey them  
 “ that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they  
 “ watch for your souls as those that must give an account, that  
 “ they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is  
 “ unprofitable for you. And Peter (so called from the firmness  
 “ of his faith) in his epistle, saith, The presbyters which are among  
 “ you I exhort, whom am also a presbyter, and a witness of the  
 “ sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory, that shall  
 “ be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, not  
 “ by constraint but willingly. These things I have written to show,  
 “ that among the ancients, presbyters and bishops were the same.  
 “ But, by little and little, that all the seeds of dissension might  
 “ be plucked up, the whole care was devolved on one. As, there-  
 “ fore, the presbyters know, that by the custom of the church they  
 “ are subject to him who is their president, so let bishops, know,  
 “ that they are above presbyters more by the custom of the church  
 “ than by the true dispensation of Christ; and that they ought to  
 “ rule the church in common, imitating Moses, who, when he  
 “ might alone rule the people of Israel, chose seventy with whom  
 “ he might judge the people.”

In Jerome's epistle to Evagrius, he speaks on the same subject

in the following pointed language.\* “ I hear that a certain person  
 “ has broken out into such folly that he prefers *deacons* before  
 “ *presbyters*, that is before *bishops*: for when the apostle clearly  
 “ teaches that *presbyters* and *bishops* were the same, who can  
 “ endure it, that a *minister of tables and of widows* should  
 “ proudly exalt himself above those at whose prayers the body  
 “ and blood of Christ is made ? Do you seek for authority ? hear  
 “ that testimony : *Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to*  
 “ *all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops*  
 “ *and deacons.* Would you have another example ? In the Acts of  
 “ the Apostles, *Paul* speaks thus to the priests of one church—  
 “ *Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy*  
 “ *Ghost hath made you bishops, that you govern the church which*  
 “ *he hath purchased with his own blood.* And lest any should  
 “ contend about there being a plurality of bishops in one church,  
 “ hear also another testimony, by which it may most manifestly be  
 “ proved, that a bishop and presbyter are the same—*For this cause*  
 “ *left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things*  
 “ *that are wanting, and ordain presbyters in every city, as I have*  
 “ *appointed thee.* If any be blameless, the husband of one wife,  
 “ &c. *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God.* And to  
 “ *Timothy—Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given*  
 “ *thee by prophecy, by the laying on of the hands of the presby-*  
 “ *tery.* And *Peter* also, in his first epistle, saith, *the presbyters*

\* Among the numerous expedients to get rid of this decisive testimony of *Jerome*, one is, to represent that the epistle to *Evagrius* was written in a fit of passion, in which the worthy father had particular inducements to magnify the office of presbyter as much as possible. To suppose that a man of *Jerome's* learning and piety, even in a fit of anger, would deliberately commit to writing a doctrine directly opposite to “ the faith of the universal church from the beginning,” and that too on a point of fundamental importance to the very existence of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth; that he should so earnestly insist upon it, and make such formal and solemn appeals to Scripture in support of it, is a supposition which can only be made by those who are driven to the utmost extremity for a subterfuge. But how shall we account for *Jerome's* having maintained the same doctrine, illustrated by the same reasonings, and fortified by the same Scriptural quotations, in his *commentary on Titus*, before quoted, which must be supposed to have been written with much reflection and seriousness, and which was solemnly delivered as a legacy to the church, by one of her most illustrious ministers ?

“ *which are among you I exhort, who am also a presbyter, and a*  
 “ *witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the*  
 “ *glory that shall be revealed; to rule the flock of Christ, and to*  
 “ *inspect it, not of constraint, but willingly according to God;*  
 “ *which is more significantly expressed in the Greek ἐπισκοποῦντες,*  
 “ *that is, superintending it, whence the name of bishop is drawn.*  
 “ *Do the testimonies of such men seem small to thee? Let the*  
 “ *evangelical trumpet sound, the son of thunder, whom Jesus loved*  
 “ *much, who drank the streams of doctrine from our Saviour’s*  
 “ *breast. The presbyter to the elect lady and her children, whom*  
 “ *I love in the truth. And in another epistle, the presbyter to the*  
 “ *beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. But that one was after-*  
 “ *wards chosen, who should be set above the rest, was done as a*  
 “ *remedy against schism; lest every one drawing the Church of*  
 “ *Christ to himself, should break it in pieces. For at Alexandria,*  
 “ *from Mark, the Evangelist, to Heraclas and Dionysius, the*  
 “ *bishops thereof, the presbyters always named one, chosen from*  
 “ *among them, and placed in an higher degree, bishop. As if an*  
 “ *army should make an emperor; or the deacons should choose*  
 “ *one of themselves whom they knew to be most diligent, and call*  
 “ *him arch-deacon.” And a little afterwards, in the same epistle,*  
 “ *he says, “Presbyter and bishop, the one is the name of age, the*  
 “ *other of dignity: Whence in the epistles to Timothy and Titus,*  
 “ *there is mention made of the ordination of bishop and deacon,*  
 “ *but not of presbyters, because the presbyter is included in the*  
 “ *bishop.”*

After perusing this most explicit and unequivocal testimony; a  
 testimony which one would imagine could scarcely have been more  
 formal or more decisive; you will be surprised to learn that some  
 Episcopal writers have ventured to say, that *Jerome* merely offers  
 a *conjecture*, that in the apostle’s days, bishop and presbyter were  
 the same. If the extracts above stated be the language of *conjecture*  
 I should be utterly at a loss to know what is the language of  
*assertion* and *proof*. In what manner could he have spoken more  
 clearly or more positively? But I will not insult your understand-  
 ings by pursuing the refutation of this pretence. From the  
 foregoing extracts, it is abundantly apparent:

1. That the interpretation given, in my second letter, of those  
 passages of Scripture which represent bishops and presbyters as



the *same*, in *office* and *power*, as well as in *title*, is by no means a novel interpretation, invented to serve the purposes of a party, as Episcopalians have frequently asserted; but an interpretation more than 1400 years old; and represented as the general sense of the apostolic age, by one who had as good an opportunity of becoming acquainted with early opinions on this subject as any man then living.

2. That a *departure* from the *primitive model* of church government had taken place in *Jerome's* day; that this departure consisted in making a distinction of order between *bishops* and *presbyters*; and that this distinction was neither warranted by scripture, nor conformable to the apostolic model; but owed its origin to the decay of religion, and especially to the ambition of ministers. It commenced "when every one began to think that those whom he baptized were rather *his* than *Christ's*."

3. It is expressly asserted by *Jerome*, that this change in the constitution of the Christian ministry came in (*paulatim*) *by little and little*. He says, indeed, in one of the passages above quoted, that it was agreed "all over the world," as a remedy against schism, to choose one of the presbyters, and make him *president* or *moderator* of the body; and some commentators on this passage have represented it as saying that the change was made *all at once*. Fortunately, however, we have *Jerome's* express declaration in another place, that the practice came in *gradually*. But whether half a century or two centuries elapsed before the "whole world" came to an agreement on this subject, he does not say.

4. *Jerome* further informs us, that the first pre-eminence of bishops was only such as the body of the presbyters were able to confer. They were only standing *presidents* or *moderators*; and all the ordination they received, on being thus chosen, was performed *by the presbyters themselves*.\* This he tells us was the

\* To this some Episcopal writers reply, that *Jerome* does not expressly assert that the *presbyters* ordained the bishop, but only that they *chose* him, placed him in a *higher seat*, and called him bishop. And hence they take the liberty of inferring that the *election* was by the presbyters, but the *ordination* by other diocesan bishops. To suppose this, is to make *Jerome* reason most inconclusively, and adduce an instance which was not only nothing to the purpose, but directly hostile to his whole argument. If the presbyters did not do all that was done, the case had

only Episcopacy that existed in the church of *Alexandria*, one of most conspicuous then in the world, until after the middle of the third century.

5. It is finally manifest, from these quotations, that while Jerome maintains the *parity* of all ministers of the Gospel in the primitive church, he entirely excludes *deacons* from being an order of *clergy* at all. "Who can endure it, that a *minister of tables and of widows* should proudly exalt himself above those at whose prayers the body and blood of Christ is made?"

Some zealous Episcopal writers have endeavoured to destroy the force of these express declarations of *Jerome*, by quoting other passages, in which he speaks of *bishops* and *presbyters* in the current language of his time. For instance, in one place, speaking of that pre-eminence which bishops had *then* attained, he asks, "What can a *bishop* do that a *presbyter* may not also do, excepting *ordination*?" But it is evident that *Jerome*, in this passage, refers, not to the *primitive* right of *bishops*, but to prerogative which they had gradually *acquired*, and which generally yielded to them in his day. His position is, that even *then* there was no right which they arrogated to themselves above presbyters, excepting that of ordination. In like manner, in another place, he makes a kind of loose comparison between the officers of the Christian Church, and the *Jewish Priesthood*. These passages, however, and others of a similar kind, furnish nothing in support of the Episcopal cause.\* *Jerome*, when writing on ordinary occasions, spoke of Episcopacy as it *then stood*. But when he undertook explicitly to deliver an opinion respecting *primitive* Episcopacy, he expressed himself in the words we have seen;

nothing to do with his reasoning. Besides, *Eutychius* the patriarch of *Alexandria*, in his *Origines Ecclesiæ Alexandrinæ*, published by the learned *Selden*, expressly declares, "that the twelve presbyters constituted by *Mark*, upon the vacancy of the see, did choose out of their number one to be head over the rest, and the other eleven did lay their hands upon him, and blessed him, and made him Patriarch."

\* Accordingly bishop *Stillingfleet* declares, "Among all the *fifteen* testimonies produced by a learned writer out of *Jerome*, for the superiority of *bishops* above *presbyters*, I cannot find one that does found it upon *divine right*; but only on the *convenience* of such an order for the peace and unity of the church." *Irenicum*. Part II. chapter 6th.

words as absolutely decisive as any friend of Presbyterian parity could wish. To attempt to set vague allusions, and phrases of dubious import, in opposition to such express and unequivocal passages; passages in which the writer professedly and formally lays down a doctrine, reasons at great length in its support, and deliberately deduces his conclusion, is as absurd as it is uncandid. *Jerome*, therefore, notwithstanding all the arts which have been employed to set aside his testimony, remains a firm and decisive witness in support of our principle, that the doctrine of ministerial parity was the doctrine of the primitive church. Accordingly bishop *Jewel*, professor *Raignolds*, bishop *Stillingfleet*, and other learned divines of the church of England, as I shall afterwards show, interpret this father, on the subject of Episcopacy, precisely as I have done, and consider him as expressly declaring that *bishop* and *presbyter* were the same in the apostolic age.

But what strongly confirms our interpretation of *Jerome* is, that several fathers contemporary, or nearly so, with him, when called to speak specifically on the same subject, make, in substance, the same statement. In other parts of their writings, they speak, as *Jerome* did, in the current language of their time: But when they had occasion to express a precise opinion on the point now under consideration, they do it in a way not to be mistaken. Two or three examples of this will be sufficient.

*Augustine*, bishop of *Hippo*, in writing to *Jerome*, who was a presbyter, expresses himself thus: "I entreat you to correct me faithfully when you see I need it; for although, according to the names of honour which the custom of the church has now brought into use, the office of bishop is greater than that of presbyter, nevertheless, in many respects, *Augustine* is inferior to *Jerome*." *Epist.* 19. *ad hierom.* It is worthy of notice that bishop *Jewel* in the "Defence of his Apology for the Church of England," produces this passage for the express purpose of showing the original identity of bishop and presbyter, and translates it thus: "The office of bishop is above the office of priest, not by authority of the scriptures, but after the names of honour which the custom of the church hath now obtained." *Defence*, 122, 123.

If there is meaning in words, *Augustine* represents the superiority of *bishops* to presbyters as introduced by the custom of the church, rather than divine appointment.

*Hilary*, (sometimes called *Ambrose*) who wrote about the year 376, in his *Commentary on Ephesians* iv. 2. has the following passage. "After that churches were planted in all places, and officers ordained, matters were settled *otherwise than they were in the beginning*. And hence it is, that the apostles' writings *do not in all things agree to the present constitution of the church*: because they were written under the first rise of the church; for he calls *Timothy*, who was created a *presbyter* by him, a *bishop*, for so at first the *presbyters* were called; among whom this was the course of governing churches, that as one withdrew another took his place; and in *Egypt*, even at this day, the *presbyters ordain* (or *consecrate, consignant*) in the bishop's absence. But because the following *presbyters* began to be found unworthy to hold the first place, the method *was changed*, the council providing that not order, but merit, should create a bishop."

In this passage, we have not only an express declaration that the Christian church, in the days of *Hilary*, had deviated from its primitive pattern; but also that this deviation had a particular respect to the name and office of *bishop*, which, in the beginning, was the same with *presbyter*. He also declares, that, notwithstanding this change, *presbyters*, even then, sometimes ordained; and that the reason of their not continuing to exercise this power was, that an *ecclesiastical* arrangement, *subsequent to the apostolical age*, alone prevented it.

The testimony of *Chrysostom*, who wrote about the year 398, is also in our favour. "The apostles," says he, "having discoursed concerning the bishops, and described them, declaring what they ought to be, and from what they ought to abstain, omitting the order of *presbyters*, descends to the *deacons*; and why so, but because between bishop and *presbyter* there is scarcely any difference; and to them is committed both the instructions and the *presidency* of the church; and whatever he said of *bishops* agrees also to *presbyters*. In *ordination alone* they have gone beyond the *presbyters*, and of this they seem to have defrauded them."\* 1 *Epist. ad Tim. Hom.* 11.

\* This perfectly agrees with the representation of *Jerome*, (with whom *Chrysostom* was nearly contemporary) who says that the only right which bishops had gained over *presbyters*, in his day, was that of *ordination*.

*Theodoret*, who flourished about the year 430, in his commentary on 1 *Tim.* iii. makes the following declaration: "The apostles call a *presbyter* a *bishop*, as we showed when we expounded the epistle to the *Philippians*, and which may be also learned from this place, for after the precepts proper to *bishops*, he describes the things which belong to *deacons*. But, as I said, of *old* they called the same men both *bishops*, and *presbyters*."

*Primasius*, who was contemporary with *Theodoret*, and is said to have been *Augustine's* disciple, in explaining 1 *Tim.* iii. asks, "Why the apostle leaps from the duties of *bishops* to the duties of *deacons*, without any mention of *presbyters*?" and answers, "because *bishops* and *presbyters* are the same degree."

*Sedulius* also, who wrote about the year 470, in his commentary on *Titus* i. expressly asserts the identity of bishop and presbyter. He declares, not only that the *titles* are interchangeably applied to the same men, but also that *the office is the same*; many of them being found in the primitive church, in one city, which could not be true of *diocesan bishops*. In proof of this, he adduces the case of the elders of *Ephesus*, *Acts* xx. who all dwelt in one city, and who, though called *elders* or *presbyters* in the 17th verse of that chapter, are yet, in the 28th verse, called *bishops*.

And, finally, *Aerius*, a presbyter of *Sebastia*, and contemporary with *Jerome*, maintained the same doctrine with that father, on the subject before us. He not only opposed prayers for the dead, the superstitious observance of fasts and festivals, and other uncommanded rites; but he insisted, with zeal, that bishop and presbyter were the same in the apostolic church, and that there ought to be no distinction of orders in the holy ministry.

We are told indeed by the friends of prelacy, that *Aerius*, was reputed an *heretic* for holding that there was no difference between *bishops* and *presbyters*. And as an authority on this subject, they refer us to *Epiphanius*, who, towards the close of the fourth century, undertook to give a list of heresies, and included *Aerius* in the number. But when this alleged fact is impartially examined, it will be found to weigh nothing in this controversy. For, in the first place, *Epiphanius* is a writer of no credit. The learned *Mosheim* speaks of him in the following terms. "His book against all the heresies which had sprung up in the church until his time, has little or no reputation; as it is full of inaccuracies and errors,

“and discovers almost in every page the levity and ignorance of its author.” But, *secondly*, by comparing the whole testimony of antiquity on this subject, it appears that *Aerius* was condemned not so much for maintaining that *bishop* and *presbyter* were the same *by the word of God*, as for insisting that there *ought not to be any difference made between them*; in asserting which, he opposed that pre-eminence which the bishops *had gradually gained*, and set himself against the *actual* constitution of most of the churches in his day. For this he was hated and reviled by the friends of high-church doctrines, and stigmatized as a *heretic* and *schismatic*.\* This appears to have been the true reason why *Aerius* rendered himself so obnoxious, and was condemned by so many; while *Jerome* and *Augustin*, unquestionably the most learned divines of the age, though they held and avowed substantially the same doctrine, yet escaped similar treatment, by tolerating, and even approving the moderate prelacy which was established in their time, not as a *divine appointment*, but as a system founded on *human prudence*. Accordingly Bishop *Stillingfleet* observes, “I believe, upon the strictest inquiry, *Medina’s* judgment will prove true, that *Jerome*, *Augustin*, *Ambrose*, *Chrysostom*, *Theodoret*, and *Theophylact*, were all of *Aerius* his judgment, as to the identity of both the name and the order of *bishops* and *presbyters* in the primitive church. But here lay the difference: *Aerius* proceeded from hence to separate from bishops and their churches, because they were bishops. Whereas *Jerome*, while he held the same doctrine did not think it necessary to cause a schism in the church by separating from the bishops, for his opinion is clear, that the first institution of them was for preventing schism, and therefore for peace and unity he thought their institution very useful in the

\* The following passage from Dr. *Hawies’s* (an Episcopal clergyman) *Ecclesiastical History*, i. p. 340, is worthy of notice. “*Aerius* made a fiercer resistance, and maintained more offensive doctrines; that *bishops* and *presbyters* in the Scripture are the same persons, and only different descriptions of age and office; that prayers for the dead were futile, and hopes from their intercession vain; that stated fasts and festivals had no prescription in the New Testament. These, with similar assertions, roused a host of enemies, and he was quickly silenced. So superstition stalked triumphant, and no man dared open his mouth against any abuses.”



“church of God.” *Irenicum*. To the judgment of *Stillingfleet* may be added that of Professor *Raignolds*, Bishop *Morton*, and and other eminent Episcopal writers, who frankly acknowledge that *Aerius* coincided in opinion on this subject with *Jerome*, and other distinguished fathers, who undeniably taught the same doctrine, without being stigmatized as heretics.

Another witness on whose testimony much stress is laid by Episcopalians, is *Eusebius*. They tell us that this historian, who lived early in the *fourth* century, frequently speaks of *bishops* as superior to common *presbyters*; that he gives catalogues of the bishops who presided over several of the most eminent churches; that he mentions their names in the order of succession, from the apostolic age down to his own time; and that all succeeding ecclesiastical writers speak the same language. But what does all this prove? Nothing more than we have before granted. No one disputes that before the time of *Constantine*, in whose reign *Eusebius* lived, a kind of prelacy prevailed, which was more fully organized and established by that emperor. But does *Eusebius* inform us what *kind of difference* there was between the *bishops* and *presbyters* of his day? Does he say that the former were a different order from the latter? Does he declare that there was a superiority of order vested in bishops by *divine appointment*? Does he assert that *bishops* in the days of the Apostles, and for a century afterwards, were the same *kind of officers* with those who were called by the same title in the fourth century? Does he tell us that this superior order of clergy were the only ecclesiastical officers who were allowed, in his day, to *ordain* and *confirm*? I have never met with a syllable of all this in *Eusebius*. All that can be gathered from him is, that there were persons called *bishops* in the days of the apostles; that there had been a succession of *bishops* in the church from the apostles to the fourth century, when he lived; and that in *his day*, there was a distinction between bishops and other presbyters. But does any one deny this? To assert that, because *Eusebius* speaks of particular persons in the first and second centuries as *bishops* of particular churches; therefore they were so in the prelatiical sense of the word, is really playing on the credulity of unwary readers; since Episcopalians themselves grant that the term bishop was applied, in the apostolic age, and for some time afterwards, differently from what it was in the age of *Eusebius*.

We agree that there were *bishops* in the first century, and have proved from Scripture and the early fathers, that this title was then applied to the ordinary pastors of single congregations. We agree, also, that there was a succession of *bishops* in the second and third centuries. And finally, we agree that in the time of *Constantine*, prelacy was established in the church. All this is perfectly consistent with our doctrine, viz. that *diocesan* episcopacy, or *bishops*, as an order superior to *presbyters*, were unknown in the primitive church. I have never heard of a sentence in *Eusebius* that touches this point; and I need not repeat that it is the grand point in dispute. On the other hand, we have seen that *Jerome*, who lived and wrote a little after *Eusebius*, not only touches this point, but formally discusses it, and unequivocally decides, that the *bishops* of *Ephesus*, *Philippi*, and *Crete*, in the days of *Paul*, were a very different kind of church officers from those *bishops* who lived in the fourth century.

But this is not all. When *Eusebius* gives us formal catalogues of *bishops* in succession, from the apostles' time until his own, he himself warns us against laying too much stress on his information; frankly confessing, "that he was obliged to rely much on *tradition*, and that he could trace no footsteps of other historians going before him only in a few narratives." This confession of *Eusebius*, I shall present in the words of the great *Milton*. "*Eusebius*, the ancientest writer of church history extant, confesses "in the 4th chapter of his 3d book, that it was no easy matter "to tell who were those that were left bishops of the churches by "the apostles, more than what a man might gather from the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the *Epistles of St. Paul*, in which number he "reckons *Timothy* for bishop of *Ephesus*. So as may plainly "appear, that this tradition of bishopping *Timothy* over *Ephesus*, "was but taken for granted out of that place in *St. Paul*, which "was only an entreating him to tarry at *Ephesus*, to do something "left him in charge. Now if *Eusebius*, a famous writer, thought "it so difficult to tell who were appointed bishops by the apostles, "much more may we think it difficult to *Leontius*, an obscure "bishop, speaking beyond his own diocese; and certainly much "more hard was it for either of them to determine what *kind* of "bishops these were, if they had so little means to know *who* they "were; and much less reason have we to stand to their definitive "sentence, seeing they have been so rash as to raise up such lofty

“bishops and bishopricks, out of places of scripture merely “misunderstood. Thus while we leave the Bible to gad after these “traditions of the ancients, we hear the ancients themselves “confessing, that what knowledge they had in this point was such “as they had gathered from the Bible.” *Milton against Prelatical “Episcopacy*, p. 3.

Besides the quotations above presented, which abundantly prove that the primitive *bishop* was the pastor of a single congregation, there are some facts, incidentally stated, by early writers, which serve remarkably to confirm the same truth.

The *first* fact is, the *great number* of bishops which ecclesiastical historians inform us, were found in early periods of the church, within small districts of country. *Eusebius* tells us, that about the year 260, when *Gallienus* was emperor, *Paul*, bishop of *Antioch*, began to oppose the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. A council was immediately called at *Antioch*, to consider and judge of *Paul's* heresy. *Dionysius*, bishop of the church of *Alexandria*, was invited, but did not attend; and the historian, after mentioning six conspicuous names, adds, “It would be nowise difficult to enumerate *six hundred* other bishops, who all flowed together to that “place.” At a conference which *Augustin*, and the bishops of his province, in *Africa*, had with the *Donatists*, about the year 410, there were present between *five and six hundred bishops*. *Victor Ulicensis* in his work *De Persecutione Vandalica*, informs us, that from the part of *Africa* in which this persecution took place, *six hundred and sixty* bishops fled, besides the great number that were murdered and imprisoned, and many more who were tolerated. Here, then, we find five or six hundred bishops residing in districts of country not more extensive than some of our larger states. Can any reasonable man imagine, for a moment, that these were *diocesans*, each having many churches, with their pastors, under his care? It is impossible. No one who is acquainted with the state of the church in those early times, and especially with the difficulty and infrequency of *long journeys*, at that period, will believe that these *bishops* were any other than the *pastors* of single congregations. To suppose that they were *diocesans*, in the modern sense of the word, would be an absurdity. In the state of *New York* there is but one Episcopal bishop; and

over all the ten thousand parish churches in England, there are only twenty-seven of this order. In proportion as the church, among other corruptions, receded from the scriptural doctrine of ministerial parity, in the same proportion those who were called bishops became less and less numerous ; insomuch, that at the great council of *Trent* there were only about *forty* bishops convened.

A *second* fact, the counterpart of the preceding, is equally decisive. It is the *small number of souls* committed to the care of some of the early bishops. We are informed that *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, when he was made bishop of *Neo-cæsarea*, in *Pontus*, about A. D. 250, had but *seventeen* professing christians in his parish.\* And in many of the early writers we read of bishops being located in small obscure villages, within three or four miles of each other. This is surely descriptive of *parochial*, and not of *diocesan* Episcopacy. It would, manifestly, be the height of absurdity to suppose that pastors who could not possibly have more than a few hundred souls under their care, were any other than overseers of single congregations.

A *third* fact, which goes far towards proving that *bishops*, in early times, were the ordinary pastors of single congregations, is that it was then customary for the *flock* of which the bishop was to have the charge, to *meet together* for the purpose of *electing* him ; and he was always ordained *in their presence*. *Cyprian*, in a passage quoted in a preceding page, expressly tells us, that these were standing rules in choosing and ordaining bishops ; and *Eusebius*, (*lib. 6. cap. 28, p. 229.*) in giving an account of the election of *Fabianus* to the office of bishop, in *Rome*, confirms the statement of *Cyprian*. He tells us, that upon the death of Bishop *Anterus*, “ All the people met together in the church to choose a “ successor, proposing several illustrious and eminent personages “ as fit for that office, whilst no one so much as thought upon “ *Fabianus*, then present, till a dove miraculously came and sat “ upon his head, in the same manner as the Holy Ghost formerly “ descended on our Saviour ; and then all the people, guided as it “ were with one divine spirit, cried out with one mind and soul, “ that *Fabianus* was worthy of the bishoprick : and so straightway

\* Gregor. Nyss. Oper. Vol. II. p. 979.

“taking him, they placed him on the Episcopal throne.” The very existence of these rules in early times shows that bishops were then nothing more than the pastors of single churches; for in no other case is the application of such rules possible. And accordingly afterwards, when diocesan Episcopacy crept into the church, this mode of choosing and ordaining bishops became impracticable, and was gradually laid aside.

A *fourth* fact, which shows that the primitive bishop was the pastor of a single church or congregation, is that in the first three centuries, the bishop’s charge was commonly called *παροικία*, a *parish*, signifying those who resided in the *immediate vicinity* of each other. But, in process of time, when the bishop’s power was enlarged, and his territorial limits extended, his charge began to be called *διοίκησις*, a *diocese*, a word notoriously taken from the secular language of the Roman empire, and expressive of a larger jurisdiction. This change of *diction*, evidently contemporary with the change of *fact*, is too significant to be overlooked.

A *fifth* fact, which shows that primitive Episcopacy was *parochial* and not *diocesan*, is, that for a considerable time after the days of the apostles, all the *elders* who were connected with a *bishop*, are represented as *belonging to the same congregation with him*, and *sitting with him* when the congregation was convened for public worship. Indeed, some of the early writers go so far as to inform us in what manner they were seated, viz. that the *bishop* sat in the middle of a semi-circular bench; that the *elders* took their places on the same bench, on each side of their president or moderator; and that the *deacons* remained in a standing posture in the front of this seat, and in a lower place, ready to perform the services required of them. This representation perfectly accords with our doctrine of primitive episcopacy, in which every congregation was furnished with a bishop, elders, and deacons; but cannot possibly be reconciled with the diocesan form.

A *sixth* fact, which shows that the primitive bishop was only the pastor of a single congregation, is, that the early writers represent the bishop as *living in the same house with his presbyters or elders*; a house near the place of worship to which they resorted, and capable of accommodating them all. They tell us, also, that the bishop, together with his elders, were supported by the same oblations; that these oblations were offered on *one altar*,

or communion table; and that they were constantly divided, agreeably to certain established rules between the bishop and elders. It must be obvious to every impartial reader, that this account agrees only with the system of parochial episcopacy, and that on any other principle such a plan of procedure would be at once impracticable and absurd.

The *last* circumstance relating to the primitive bishop which serves to fix his character, as the pastor of a single congregation, is *the nature of that service which he was accustomed to perform*. We have seen something of this in the foregoing quotations; but it will be proper to bring together into one view the duties incumbent on the bishop, in the apostolic and immediately succeeding ages. The early writers, then, speak of the primitive bishop as performing, in general, all the baptisms in his flock; as the only person who, in ordinary cases, administered the Lord's Supper; as constantly present with his people when convened; as the leader of their worship; as their stated public instructor; as visiting all the sick under his care; as catechising the young people several times in each week; as having the superintendency of the poor, none of whom were to be relieved by the deacons without, in each particular case, consulting the bishop; as celebrating all marriages; as attending all funerals; as under obligations to be personally acquainted with every individual of his flock, not overlooking even the servant-men and maids; as employed in healing differences among neighbours; and besides all these, attending to the discipline of his society, receiving and excluding members, &c. &c. Now is it not evident that no man could perform these duties for more than a single congregation? Can any impartial reader believe that the officers to whom all these details of parochial labours were allotted, were any other than the pastors of particular churches? To suppose that they were diocesan bishops, having a number of congregations, with subordinate pastors, under their control, is a supposition too absurd to be for a moment admitted.

Such is the testimony of the later fathers on the subject before us. We can find much evidence that, after the close of the *third century*, a difference of rank between *bishops* and ordinary *presbyters* began to be generally acknowledged; but we can find *no evidence whatever*, within the first *four centuries*, that the Christian church considered diocesan Episcopacy as the *apostolic*



and *primitive* form. On the contrary, we have found several fathers of high reputation expressly declaring, that in the primitive church bishop and presbyter were the same; and that prelacy, as it existed in the *fourth* and following centuries, was a *human invention*, and *gradually* adopted in the church, as a measure of *prudence*. We have found, in particular, one father, who stands at the pinnacle of honour, for learning as well as piety, maintaining both these positions with a clearness, a force of argument, and a detail of illustration, which one would imagine might satisfy incredulity itself. And we have seen in these early writers, a variety of facts *incidentally* stated; facts which, taken *alone*, would be considered by any court on earth as affording conclusive proof, that even after a moderate kind of prelacy arose, the bishops were still the pastors of single congregations.

I will not exhaust your patience, my brethren, by pursuing further a chain of testimony so clear and indisputable. I have intentionally disguised nothing that seemed to favour the Episcopal cause; and, indeed, amidst such poverty of even plausible evidence in their behalf, there is little temptation to disguise any thing. It has truly filled me with surprise at every step of my progress, to observe, that, with all the confidence of assertion, and all the parade of testimony, exhibited by the friends of prelacy, they should be able to produce so little from the fathers, their strong hold, which can yield them even the semblance of support. I cannot, therefore, conclude this letter in words more expressive of my fixed opinion, than those of a distinguished bishop of the Church of *England*, who, though he regarded prelacy as a wise *human* institution, steadfastly resisted the claim of *divine right*, which some high churchmen in his day were disposed to urge. After having stated some of their most plausible arguments, he declares, "I hope my reader will now see what weak proofs are brought for this distinction and superiority of order. No scripture; no primitive general council; no general consent of primitive doctors and fathers; no, not *one* primitive father of note, speaking particularly and home to their purpose."\*

\* Bishop Croft's *Naked Truth*, p. 47.

## LETTER VI.

TESTIMONY OF THE REFORMERS, AND OTHER WITNESSES FOR THE  
TRUTH, IN DIFFERENT AGES AND NATIONS.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

You have been already reminded, that neither the question before us, nor any other which relates to the faith or the order of the church, is to be decided by *human* authority. We have a higher and more unerring standard. But still, when there is a remarkable concurrence of opinion among learned and holy men, in favour of any doctrine or practice, it affords a strong presumptive argument that such doctrine or practice is conformable to Scripture. Thus the fact, that the great body of the reformers concurred in embracing and supporting that system of evangelical truth, which has been since very improperly styled *Calvinism*\*, is justly viewed by the friends of that system as a powerful argument in its favour. Let us apply this principle to the case under consideration.

It has been common for the zealous friends of prelacy to insinuate, that the Presbyterian doctrine of parity was unknown till the time of *Calvin*; that he was the first distinguished and successful advocate for this doctrine; and that the great body of the reformers totally differed from him on this subject, and embraced Episcopacy. How persons even tolerably versed in the history of the reformed churches, could ever allow themselves to make such a representation, I am altogether at a loss to conceive. Nothing certainly can be more remote from fact. The smallest attention to the subject will convince every impartial inquirer, that the most distinguished witnesses for evangelical truth, through the dark ages, long before *Calvin* lived, maintained the doctrine of ministerial parity; that the earliest reformers, both in Great Britain and

\*I say *improperly* styled *Calvinism*, because, to say nothing of its much greater antiquity, the same system had been distinctly taught by several eminent reformers, and among others, by *Luther* himself, before *Calvin* appeared.

on the continent of Europe, admitted the same principle ; that all the reformed churches, excepting that of *England*, were organized on this principle; that the church of *England* stands alone in the whole Protestant world, in making diocesan Bishops an order of clergy, superior to presbyters; and that even those venerable men who finally settled her government and worship, did not consider this superiority as resting on the ground of *Divine appointment*, but of *ecclesiastical usage* and *human expediency*.

If I mistake not, it will be easy to satisfy you, by a very brief induction of facts, that these assertions are not lightly made.

In the honourable catalogue of witnesses for the truth, amidst the corruption and darkness of papal error, the *Waldenses* hold the first place. They began to appear about the close of the seventh century, when they resided chiefly in the valleys of *Piedmont*. But they afterwards greatly multiplied, spread themselves extensively in *France*, *Switzerland*, and *Italy*, and, under different names in different districts, continued their testimony in favour of evangelical truth, for a number of centuries. All Protestant historians concur in representing them as constituting the purest part of the Christian church for several ages : and *Reinerius*, who had once lived among them, and who was their bitter persecutor, says, “ They are more pernicious to the church of *Rome* than any other sect of heretics, for three reasons : 1. Because they are *older* than any other sect ; for some say that they have been ever since the time of *Sylvester* ; and others say, from the time of the apostles. 2. Because they are more *extensively spread* than any other sect ; there being scarcely a country into which they have not crept. 3. Because other sects are abominable to God for their blasphemies ; but the *Waldenses* are *more pious* than any other heretics ; they believe truly of God, live justly before men, and receive all the articles of the creed ; only they hate the church of *Rome*.”

Among the numerous points in which these witnesses for the truth rejected the errors of the Romish church, and contended for the doctrine of Scripture, and the apostolic age, one was that there ought to be *no diversity of rank* among ministers of the Gospel ; that bishops and presbyters, according to the word of God, and primitive practice, were the same order. Nor did they merely embrace this doctrine in theory. Their ecclesiastical organization was Presbyterian in its form. I know that this fact concerning the

*Waldenses* has been denied ; but it is established beyond all reasonable question by authentic historians. *Perrin*, *Æneas Sylvius*,\* *Thuanus*, *Walsingham*, and others, who considered the tenet as a most offensive one, expressly assert that they held it. And although at some periods of their history they had persons among them whom they denominated *bishops* ; yet it is well known that they were mere *presbyters*, who received no new consecration as bishops ; and that they laid claim to no superiority of order or power.

The noble stand in defence of evangelical truth, made by the celebrated Dr. *John Wickliffe*,† is well known. This illustrious English divine was professor of divinity in the university of Oxford, and has been frequently called “ the morning star of the reformation.” He protested with great boldness and zeal against the superstitions of the church of *Rome*, and taught a system, both of doctrine and order, remarkably similar to that which *Luther*, *Calvin*, and the great body of the reformers, two hundred years afterwards, united in recommending to the Christian world.‡ “ He was for rejecting all “ mere human rites, and new shadows or traditions in religion ; “ and with regard to the *identity of the order of bishops and “ priests* in the apostolic age, he is very positive : *Unum audacter “ assero*,” &c. “ One thing I boldly assert, that in the primitive “ church, or in the time of the Apostle *Paul*, two orders of clergy “ were thought sufficient, viz. *Priest* and *Deacon* ; and I do also “ say, that in the time of *Paul*, *fuit idem presbyter atque episco-*

\* *Æneas Sylvius* declares, “ They deny the hierarchy ; maintaining “ that there is no difference among the priests by reason of dignity of “ office.” Quotations equally decisive might be produced from other authentic writers.

† “ *Wickliffe*,” says Bishop *Newcome*, “ was not only a good divine, “ and scripturist, but well skilled in the civil, canon, and English law. “ To great learning and abilities, he added the ornament of a grave, un- “ blemished, and pious conduct.”

‡ He renounced the supremacy of the *pope*; rejected the heresy of *transubstantiation*; and taught, that the Bible is a perfect rule of life and manners, and ought to be read by the people; that human *traditions* are superfluous and sinful ; that we must practise and teach only the laws of Christ ; that mystical and significant *ceremonies* in religious worship are unlawful ; and that to restrain men to a *prescribed form of prayer*, is contrary to the liberty granted them by God.

“*p*us, i. e. a priest and a bishop were one and the same ; for in those times the distinct orders of pope, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, arch-deacons, officials, and deans, were not invented.”\* The followers of *Wickliffe* imbibed this as well as the other opinions of their master ; and, accordingly, it is well known that they held and practised ordination by *presbyters*, not for want of diocesan bishops, but on the avowed principle, that they considered all ministers who “laboured in the word and doctrine,” and administered sacraments, as having equal power.†

The renowned martyrs, *John Huss* and *Jerome*, of Prague,‡ who laid down their lives for the truth, a little after the time of *Wickliffe*, embraced the greater part, if not all the opinions of the English reformer, and especially his doctrine concerning the *parity* of Christian ministers. Their disciples acted in conformity with this doctrine. *Æneas Sylvius*, (afterwards *Pius II.*) speaking of the *Hussites*, says, “One of the dogmas of this *pestiferous sect*, is, that there is no difference of order among those who bear “the priestly office.” This account is confirmed by the historian *Thuanus*, who expressly speaks of their opinions as resembling those of the *English dissenters*.

The churches which ecclesiastical historians have generally distinguished by the title of the *Bohemian brethren*, and which flourished before the time of *Luther*, are considered as the descendants of the *Hussites*, and as having inherited their opinions as well as their evangelical spirit. These churches distinctly held and taught, as their book of discipline proves, that there is but one order of ministers of divine right, and, of course, that all difference of grades in the ministry, is a matter of *human prudence*. They had, indeed, among them persons who were styled *bishops* ; but they expressly disavowed the divine institution of this order ; and what is more, they derived their ministerial succession from the

\* See *Lewis's Life of Wickliffe*, 8vo. 1720.

† See *Walsingham's Hist. Brevis* A. D. 1389, 339—340.

‡ *Huss* and *Jerome* were celebrated for their learning as well as piety, and were both distinguished members of the University of *Prague*. The former was more particularly eminent on account of his erudition and eloquence, and performed at the same time the functions of professor of divinity in the University, and pastor of the church in that city. *Mosheim*.

*Waldenses*, who had no other, strictly speaking, than *Presbyterian bishops*. Even *Comenius*, their celebrated historian, who says most about their bishops, distinctly acknowledges that bishop and presbyter are *the same* by divine right. It is also an undoubted and remarkable fact, that the *Bohemian brethren* retained the office of *ruling elder* in their churches; an office which, toward the latter part of the *fourth* century, had been, in the greater part of the Christian world, discontinued. The following representation by the learned *Bucer*, will be deemed, by those who are acquainted with his character, conclusive as to this fact. “The *Bohemian brethren*, who almost *alone* preserved in the world the *purity of the doctrine*, and the *vigor of the discipline* of Christ, observed “an excellent rule, for which we are compelled to give them credit, “and especially to praise that God who thus wrought by them; “notwithstanding those brethren are preposterously despised by “some learned men. The rule which they observed was this : “Besides ministers of the word and sacraments, they had, in each “church, a bench or college of men excelling in gravity and prudence, who performed the duties of admonishing and correcting “offenders, composing differences, and judicially deciding in cases “of dispute. Of this kind of elders, *Hilary* wrote, when he said, “*Unde et Synagoga*,” &c. *Script. Advers. Latom.* p. 77.

The celebrated Mr. *Tindal*, a canon of Oxford, who gave the first translation of the Bible into English, and who suffered martyrdom in the reign of *Henry VIII.* for his zeal and his distinguished labours in the cause of truth, has the following explicit declaration, in his *Practice of Popish Prelates*. “The apostles following and “obeying the rule, doctrine, and commandment of our Saviour, “ordained in his kingdom and congregation, *two* officers, one “called after the Greek word, *bishop*, in English, an *Overseer*; “which same was called *Priest*, after the Greek. Another officer “they chose, and called him *deacon*, after the Greek; a *minister*, “in English, to minister alms to the poor. All that were called “elders (or *priests*, if they so will) were called *bishops* also, though “they have now divided the names.”

The famous *John Lambert*, another martyr in the same reign, who is represented even by Episcopal historians, as a man of great learning, as well as meekness and piety, expressed himself on the subject under consideration in the following manner: “As touching priesthood in the primitive church, when virtue bare the most



“room, there were no more officers in the church than *bishops* and  
 “*deacons*, as witnesseth, besides scripture, full apertly *Jerome*, in  
 “his commentary upon *St. Paul’s* epistles, where he saith, that  
 “those we call *priests*, were all one, and no other but *bishops*,  
 “and the *bishops* none but *priests*.”

The fathers of the reformation in *England* were *Presbyterians* in principle ; that is, a majority of the most pious and learned among them considered bishop and presbyter as *the same*, by divine right. But as the influence of the crown was exerted in favour of prelacy ; as many of the bishops were opposed to the reformation altogether ; and as the right of the civil magistrate to direct the outward organization of the church at pleasure, was acknowledged by all the reformers, they yielded to the establishment of diocesan episcopacy, as the most suitable form of government in the circumstances then existing. But it does not appear that any one of them thought of placing episcopacy on the footing of divine right, and far less of representing it as of such indispensable and unalterable necessity, as many of their less learned sons have thought proper to maintain since that time. I know that this fact, concerning those venerable reformers, has been denied. But I know, at the same time, that it rests on proof the most complete and satisfactory, and which will ever resist all the ingenious arts which have been used to set it aside.

In the year 1537, in the reign of *Henry VIII.* there was a book published for the purpose of promoting the reformation, entitled, *The Institution of a Christian Man.* It was called the *Bishops’ Book*, because it was composed by Archbishop *Cranmer*, and several other prelates. It was recommended and subscribed by the two archbishops, by nineteen bishops, and by the lower house of convocation; published under the authority of the king, and its contents ordered to be preached to the whole kingdom. In this book it is expressly said, that, “although the fathers of the succeeding church, after the apostles instituted certain inferior degrees of ministry; yet the truth is, that in the New Testament there is no mention made of any other degree or distinction in orders, but only of *Deacons* or *Ministers*, and of *Presbyters* or *Bishops*.”\*

\*“ In Novo Testamento, nulla mentio facta est aliorum Graduum, aut distinctionum in Ordinibus, sed Diaconorum (vel ministrorum) et Presbyterorum (vel Episcoporum).”

About six years after the publication of this book, another appeared, which was designed to promote the same laudable purpose. This was entitled, "*The Necessary Erudition of a Christian Man.*" It was drawn up by a committee of bishops and other divines, was afterwards read and approved by the lords spiritual and temporal, and the lower house of parliament; was prefaced by the king and published by his command. This book certainly proves that those who drew it up, had obtained much more just and clear views of several important doctrines, than they possessed at the date of the former publication. But with regard to ministerial parity, their sentiments remained unchanged. They still asserted the same doctrine. They say, "*St. Paul consecrated and ordained bishops by the imposition of hands; but that there is no certain rule prescribed in Scripture for the nomination, election, or presentation of them; that this is left to the positive laws of every community. The office of the said ministers is, to preach the word, to minister the sacraments, to bind and loose, to excommunicate those that will not be reformed, and to pray for the universal church.*" Having afterwards mentioned the order of *deacons*, they go on to say, "*Of these two orders only, that is to say, priests and deacons, Scripture maketh express mention; and how they were conferred of the Apostles by prayer and imposition of hands.*"

About five years after the last named publication, viz. about the year 1548, *Edward VI.* called a "select assembly of divines, for the resolution of several questions relative to the settlement of religion." Of this assembly Archbishop *Cranmer* was a leading member; and to the tenth question, which respected the office of bishops and presbyters, that venerable prelate replied, "bishops and priests were at one time, and were not two things, but *one office*, in the beginning of Christ's religion." "Thus we see," says Dr. *Stillingfleet* "by testimony of him who was chiefly instrumental in our reformation, that he owned not episcopacy as a distinct order from presbytery by divine right, but only as a prudent constitution of the civil magistrate for the better governing of the church." *Irenicum.* part I. chapter VIII. Two other bishops, together with Dr. *Redmayn* and Dr. *Cox* delivered a similar opinion, in still stronger terms; and several of them adduced *Jerome* as a decided authority in support of their opinion. An

attempt has been made to place this transaction a number of years further back than it really stood, in order to show that it was at a period when the views of the reformers, with respect to the order of the church, were crude and immature. But if Bishop *Stillfleet* and Bishop *Burnet* are to be believed, such were the language and the views of *Cranmer* and other prelates, in the reign of *Edward VI.* and a very short time before the forms of ordination and other public service in the church of England were published ; in compiling which, it is acknowledged, on all hands, that the archbishop had a principal share ; and which were given to the public in the third year of the reign of that prince.

Another circumstance, which serves to show that Archbishop *Cranmer* considered the episcopal system in which he shared, as founded rather in human *prudence* and the will of the *magistrates* than the *word of God*, is, that he viewed the exercise of all episcopal jurisdiction as depending on the pleasure of the king ; and that as he gave it, so he might take it away at pleasure. Agreeably to this, when *Henry VIII.* died, the worthy primate regarded his own episcopal power as expiring with him ; and therefore would not act as archbishop till he had received a new commission from king *Edward*.

Accordingly, when these great reformers went further than to compile temporary and fugitive manuals ; when they undertook to frame the fundamental and permanent articles of their church, we find them carefully guarding against any exclusive claim in behalf of diocesan episcopacy. If they had deemed an order of bishops superior to presbyters, indispensably necessary to the regular organization of the church, and the validity of Christian ordinances, can we suppose that men who showed themselves so faithful and zealous in the cause of Christ, would have been wholly silent on the subject ? And, above all, if they entertained such an opinion, would they have forborne to express it in that article in which they undertook formally to state the doctrine of their church with respect to the Christian ministry ? That article (the 23d) is couched in the following terms. “ It is not lawful for any man to take upon him  
“ the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in  
“ the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute  
“ the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent,  
“ which be chosen and called to this work by men, who have pub-

“lic authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and “send ministers into the Lord’s vineyard.” Here is not a syllable said of diocesan bishops, or of the necessity of episcopal ordination; on the contrary, there is most evidently displayed a studious care to employ such language as would embrace the other reformed churches, and recognize as valid their ministry and ordinances.

And that such was really the design of those who drew up the articles of the church of England, is expressly asserted by Bishop *Burnet*, who will be pronounced by all a competent judge, both of the import and history of these articles. This article, he observes, “is put in very general words, far from that *magisterial stiffness* “in which some have taken upon them to dictate in this matter. “They who drew it up, had the state of the several churches before “their eyes, that had been differently reformed; and although “their own had been less forced to go out of the beaten path than “any other, yet they knew that all things among themselves had “not gone according to those rules, that ought to be sacred in regular times.” And, in a subsequent passage, he explicitly declares, that neither the reformers of the Church of England, nor their successors, for nearly eighty years after the articles were published, did ever call in question the validity of the ordination practised in the foreign reformed churches, by presbyters alone. And again, he declares—“Whatever some *hotter spirits* have thought of this, “since that time, yet we are very sure, that not only those who “penned the articles, but the body of this church, for above half “an age after, did, notwithstanding these irregularities, acknowledge the foreign churches, so constituted, to be true churches, as “to all the essentials of a church.”

Those who wish to persuade us, that the venerable reformers of the church of *England*, held the divine right of diocesan episcopacy, refer us to the *ordination service* drawn up by them, the language of which, it is contended, cannot be interpreted, and far less justified, on any other principle. But those who insist on this argument, forget that the ordination service, as it *now stands*, differs considerably from that which was drawn up by *Cranmer* and his associates. If I mistake not, that service, as it came from the hands of the reformers, did not contain a sentence inconsistent with the opinions which I have ascribed to them. Above an hundred years afterwards, in the reign of *Charles II.* this service was revised and

altered ; and it is remarkable, that the greater part of the alterations were such as indicate a decided intention in their authors to make the whole speak a language more favourable to the *divine* appointment of episcopacy than formerly. In the opinion of good judges, the ordination service of the church of *England* does not even *now*, assert the divine institution of prelacy ; but as left by the reformers, it certainly contained no such doctrine.

In conformity with this principle, an act of Parliament was passed, in the 13th year of the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, to reform certain *disorders touching ministers of the church*. This act, as Dr. *Strype*, an Episcopal historian, informs us, was framed with an express view to admitting into the church of *England*, those who had received Presbyterian ordination in the foreign reformed churches, on their subscribing the articles of *faith*. But can we suppose that both houses of parliament, one of them including the bench of *Bishops*, would have consented to pass such an act, unless the principle of it had been approved by the most influential divines of that church ?

Nor was this all. The *conduct* of the English Reformers corresponded with their laws and public standards. They invited several eminent divines from the foreign Reformed churches, who had received no other than Presbyterian ordination, to come over to England; and on their arrival, in consequence of this formal invitation, actually bestowed upon them important benefices in the Church and in the Universities. A more decisive testimony could scarcely be given, that those great and venerable divines had no scruple respecting the validity of ordination by presbyters. Had they held the opinion of some modern Episcopalians, and at the same time acted thus, they would have been chargeable with high treason against the Redeemer's kingdom, and have merited the reprobation of all honest men.

But further ; besides inviting these distinguished divines into *England*, and giving them a place in the bosom of their church, without requiring them to be re-ordained, Archbishops *Cranmer* and *Grindal*, and their associates, corresponded with *Calvin* ; solicited his opinion respecting many points in the reformation of the church ; and not only acknowledged him in the most explicit manner, to be a regular minister of Christ, and the church of *Geneva*, to be a sister church ; but also addressed him in terms of the

most exalted reverence, and heaped upon him every epithet of honour. Could they have done all this, if they had considered him subverting the very foundation of the church, by setting aside prelacy? When I look at the language of the first British reformers towards this venerable servant of Christ; when I hear them, not only celebrating his learning and his piety in the strongest terms, but also acknowledging, in terms equally strong, his noble services in the cause of evangelical truth, and of the Reformation; and when I find the greatest divines that England ever bred, for near a century afterwards, adopting and repeating the same language, I am tempted to ask—are some modern calumniators of *Calvin* really ignorant of what these great divines of their own church have thought and said respecting him; or have they apostatised as much from the principles of their own reformers, as they differ from *Calvin*?

Another testimony as to the light in which ordination by presbyters was viewed by the most distinguished reformers of the Church of England, is found in a license granted by archbishop *Grindal*, to the Rev. *John Morison*, a Presbyterian minister, dated April 6, 1582: “Since you, the said *John Morison*, were “*admitted and ordained* to sacred orders, and the holy ministry “*by the imposition of hands*, according to the *laudable* form and “*rite of the reformed church of Scotland*. We, therefore, as much “*as lies in us, and as by right we may, approving and ratifying* “*the form of your ordination and preferment, done in such* “*manner aforesaid*, grant unto you a license and faculty, that in “such orders, by you taken, you may, and have power, in any “convenient places, in and throughout the whole province of “*Canterbury*, to celebrate divine offices, and to minister the sacraments,” &c. Here is not only an explicit acknowledgment that ordination by *presbyters* is *valid*, but an eulogium on it as *laudable*, and this not by an obscure character, but by the primate of the Church of England.

An acknowledgment, still more solemn and decisive, is made in one of the *Canons* of the Church of *England*, in which all her clergy are commanded “to pray for the churches of *England*, “*Scotland*, and *Ireland*, as parts of Christ’s holy Catholic church, “which is dispersed throughout the world.” This canon (the 55th) among others, was enacted in 1604, when the church of *Scotland* was, as it now is, *Presbyterian*; and although the persons who



were chiefly instrumental in forming and adopting these canons, had high episcopal notions ; yet the idea that those churches which were not episcopal in their form, were not to be considered as true churches of Christ, seems at this time to have been entertained by no person of any influence in the church of England. This extravagance was reserved for after times, and the invention of it for persons of a very different spirit from that of the *Cranmers*, the *Grindals*, and the *Abbots* of the preceding age.

Dr. *Warner*, a learned episcopal historian, declares, that “ Archbishop *Bancroft* was the *first* man in the church of *England* who preached up the *divine right* of Episcopacy.” The same is asserted by many other episcopal writers ; and this passage from *Warner* is quoted with approbation by bishop *White* of *Pennsylvania*, in his *Case of the Episcopal Churches*, in showing that the doctrine which founds Episcopacy on *divine right*, has never been embraced by the great body of the most esteemed divines in the church of England.

Another fact which corroborates the foregoing statement is, that Dr. *Laud*, afterwards Archbishop, in a public disputation before the University of Oxford, venturing to assert the superiority of bishops, by divine right, was publicly checked by Dr. *Holland*, professor of divinity in that university ; who told him that “ he was “ a schismatic, and went about to make a division between the English and other reformed churches.”

The reformation in *Scotland* commenced in the year 1560. The constitution of that Church was formed, as every one knows, on the *Presbyterian* plan. This form was retained until the year 1610, when prelacy was violently introduced, against the sense of the nation. In that year *Spotiswood*, *Lamb*, and *Hamilton*, were consecrated bishops in *London*, by some of the English prelates ; and on their return home, imparted the episcopal dignity to a number of others. As they had been *presbyters* before this time, archbishop *Bancroft* proceeded to their consecration as bishops, without requiring them to be previously re-ordained as priests, expressly delivering it as his opinion, that their former Presbyterian ordination was *valid*. The church of *Scotland* remained episcopal until the year 1639, when prelacy was abolished, and the bishops deposed. On this occasion three of these prelates renounced their episcopal orders, were received by the Presbyterian

clergy as plain presbyters, and officiated as such while they lived. The rest were either excommunicated from the church, or deprived of their ministerial functions. In the year 1661, Episcopacy was again introduced into *Scotland*, and remained the established religion of the country until the Revolution of 1688, when it was again set aside, and Presbyterianism restored, which remains to the present day.

Now it is a remarkable fact, that, amidst all these revolutions in the church government of *Scotland*, the validity of ordination by presbyters, was never denied or called in question. We have already seen that Archbishop *Bancroft* pronounced the Presbyterian ordination of *Spotiswood*, *Lamb*, and *Hamilton*, to be valid. But further; in 1610, when prelacy was first established, the bishops agreed that the body of the Presbyterian clergy should be considered as regular ministers in the church, on consenting to acknowledge them as their ecclesiastical superiors, without submitting to be re-ordained. And this arrangement was actually carried into effect. Again, in 1661, at the second introduction of episcopacy, the same plan of accommodation was agreed upon and executed, though a much smaller number of the clergy submitted to its terms. And, which is a fact no less decisive, at the revolution in 1688, when Presbyterianism was restored, *four hundred* episcopal clergymen came into the bosom of the Presbyterian church, acknowledged the validity of her orders and ministrations, and were received into connexion with her on the basis of such acknowledgment. Nor is this all. About the time of the first introduction of Episcopacy into *Scotland*, a number of the people and their clergy, who were all Presbyterian, removed from that country into the north of *Ireland*, where Episcopacy was also established. To accommodate a number of the clergy, who were in this situation, the bishops in *England* drew up and transmitted to *Ireland* a plan of proceeding in their case, which recognized the validity of their ordination, and by means of which, without being re-ordained, they were actually incorporated with the established church. It is not possible to contemplate this series of facts, without perceiving, as Bishop *Burnet* declares, that, for a long time after the commencement of the reformation in Great Britain, the validity of Presbyterian ordination was distinctly and uniformly acknowledged.

It were easy to fill a volume with testimony to the same amount. But it is not necessary. If there be any fact in the history of the British churches capable of being demonstrated, it is, that their venerable reformers uniformly acknowledged the other protestant churches formed on the Presbyterian plan, to be sound members of the Universal Church, and maintained a constant and affectionate intercourse with them as such. This is so evident from their writings and their conduct, and has been so fully conceded by the ablest and most impartial judges among Episcopalians themselves, that it would be a waste of time further to pursue the proof.

From the English reformers let us pass on to those distinguished worthies who were made the instruments of reformation on the continent of Europe. *Luther* began this glorious work in *Germany*, in the year 1517. About the same time the standard of truth was raised by *Zuingli*, in *Switzerland*; and soon afterwards these great men were joined by *Carlostadt*, *Melancthon*, *Oecolampadius*, *Calvin*, *Beza*, and others. The pious exertions of these witnesses for the truth were as eminently blessed as they were active and unwearied. Princes, and a multitude of less celebrated divines, came their to help. Insomuch that before the close of that century, numerous and flourishing Protestant churches were planted throughout *Germany*, *France*, *Switzerland*, the *Low Countries*, *Sweden*, *Denmark*, and various other parts of *Europe*, from the *Mediterranean* to the confines of *Russia*.

Now it is well known that all these Protestants on the continent of *Europe*, when they threw off the fetters of papal authority, and were left free to follow the word of God, *without any exception*, recognized the doctrine of ministerial parity, and embraced it, not only in theory, but also in practice. They established *all* their churches on the basis of that principle; and to the present hour bear testimony in its favour. This may be abundantly proved, by recurring to their original confessions of faith; to their best writers; and to their uniform proceedings.

When the churches began to assume a systematic and organized form, they were all arranged by ecclesiastical writers under two grand divisions—the *reformed* and the *Lutheran*. The *reformed* churches, which were established in *France*, *Holland*, *Switzerland*, *Geneva*, and in some parts of *Germany*, from the beginning,

as is universally known, laid aside diocesan *bishops*; and have never, at any period, had an episcopal government, either in name or in fact. That these churches might have had episcopal ordination, and the whole system of prelacy, continued among them, if they had chosen to retain them, no one can doubt who is acquainted with their history. But they early embraced the doctrine of ministerial *parity*, which had been so generally adopted by preceding witnesses for the truth; and erected an ecclesiastical organization in conformity with this doctrine. Accordingly, the venerable founders of those churches, having been themselves ordained *presbyters* by Romish *bishops*; believing that the difference between these two classes of ministers was not appointed by Jesus Christ or his apostles, but invented by the church; and persuaded that, according to the practice of the primitive church, *presbyters* were fully invested with the *ordaining* power, they proceeded to ordain others, and thus transmitted the ministerial succession to those who came after them.

But it is said, that, although the reformers of *France, Holland, Geneva, Scotland, &c.* thought proper to organize their churches on the Presbyterian principle of parity; yet that *Calvin, Beza*, and other eminent divines of great authority in those churches, frequently expressed sentiments very favourable to diocesan Episcopacy, and spoke with great respect of the English hierarchy. It is not denied that those illustrious reformers, on a variety of occasions, expressed themselves in very respectful terms of the church of *England*, as it stood in their day. But whether we consider the sentiments which they expressed, or the circumstances under which they delivered them, no use can be made of this fact favourable to the cause of our opponents. The truth is, the English reformers, prevented, on the one hand, by the *crown* and the *papists*, from carrying the reformation so far as they wished; and on the other, urged by the *Puritans*, to remove *at once*, all abuses out of the church, wrote to the reformers at *Geneva*, whom they knew to have much influence in *England*, soliciting their aid, in quieting the minds of the Puritans, and in persuading them to remain in the bosom of the church, in the hope of a more complete reformation afterwards. Is it wonderful, that, at a crisis of this kind, *Calvin* and *Beza*, considering the church of *England* as struggling with difficulties; viewing *Cranmer* and his associates as eminently

pious men, who were doing the best they could in existing circumstances; hoping for more favourable times; and not regarding the form of church government as an *essential*, should write to the English reformers in a manner calculated to quiet the minds of the Puritans; and induce them to remain in connexion with the national church? This they did. But in all their communications, they never went further than to say, that they considered the hierarchy of *England* as a judicious and respectable *human institution*; and that they could, without any violation of the dictates of conscience, remain in communion with such a church. And what is the inference from this? Could not thousands of the firmest Presbyterians on earth, under similar circumstances, say the same? But did *Calvin* or *Beza* ever say, even in their most unguarded moments, that they considered prelacy as an institution of *Christ*, or his *apostles*? Did they ever express a *preference* of this form of government to the Presbyterian form? Did they, in short, ever do more than acknowledge that Episcopacy might, in some cases, be *useful* and *lawful*? But, on the other hand, how much these same reformers have said against prelacy, and in favour of ministerial parity; how strongly they have asserted, and how clearly they have proved, the former to be a human invention, and the latter to have the sanction of apostolic example; and how decidedly they speak in favour of Presbyterian principles, even in some of their most complaisant letters to the English reformers, our opponents take care not to state.\* Their caution is politic. For no human ingenuity will ever be able to refute the reasonings which those excellent men have left on record against the episcopal cause.†

\* It is almost incredible how far the declarations of *Calvin* on this subject, have been misunderstood and misrepresented. Who would imagine, when that venerable reformer, in his *Institutes*, represents the scriptures as affording a warrant for three classes of church officers, viz. *teaching elders*, *ruling elders*, and *deacons*, that any could interpret the passage as favouring the doctrine of three orders of *clergy*?

† *Beza*, in his celebrated work *De Triplici Episcopatu*, declares that there are *three* kinds of Episcopacy: The *first*, instituted by *Christ*, in which all pastors are equally *bishops*. This he calls *divine episcopacy*. The *second*, instituted by man, in which certain aged and venerable presbyters are *presidents* or *moderators* for life, without any new ordina-

With respect to the *Lutheran* churches, it is known to all well informed persons, that *they* also, from the beginning rejected diocesan episcopacy, considered as an institution of Christ, and have, to the present time, acted on this principle, acknowledging but *one order* in the christian ministry. I know that attempts have frequently been made to give a different representation of this matter. Whether these attempts have arisen from ignorance, or from a less excusable source, I will not inquire; but the position which they aim to establish is unquestionably groundless. *Luther*, the great founder of the church which bears his name, gave a practical declaration of his opinion on this subject, by one decisive fact, which is, that, though only in *priest's* orders, he himself undertook, in 1524, a few years after commencing the work of reformation, to *ordain*, and actually performed this rite, with great solemnity. His coadjutors and followers, though of no higher ecclesiastical dignity than himself, did the same. Could more decisive testimony be given as to the principles of the first *Lutherans* on this subject.

It is true, *Luther* and the leading divines of his denomination, differed from *Calvin* and his associates, with respect to one point in church government. The latter totally rejected all ministerial imparity. The former supposed that a system embracing *some degree* of imparity, was, in general, *expedient*; and accordingly, in proceeding to organize their churches, appointed *superintendants*, who enjoyed a kind of pre-eminence, and were vested with peculiar powers. But they explicitly acknowledged this office to be a *human*, and not a *divine* institution. The *superintendants* in question were mere *presbyters*, and received no new ordination in consequence of their appointment to this office. The opinion of their being a distinct and superior order of clergy, was formally rejected. And all regular Presbyterian ordinations were recognized by the church in which they presided, as valid. Nor have modern *Lutherans* apostatised in any of these points from the principles of their fathers. In all the *Lutheran* churches in *America*, and in *Europe*, to the south of *Sweden*, there are no *bishops*. Their *superintendants*, or *seniors*, have no other ordination than that of

tion: this he calls *human episcopacy*. The *third*, in which prelates are regarded as a superior order, he styles *Satanical episcopacy*. This statement is introduced merely to show with how little propriety *Beza* can be quoted as a friend to prelacy.



*presbyters*. When *they* are not present, other *presbyters* ordain without a scruple. And the ordinations practised in Presbyterian churches they acknowledge to be as valid as their own; and accordingly receive into full ministerial standing, those who have been ordained in this manner.

The testimony of Dr. *Mosheim*, the celebrated ecclesiastical historian, who was himself a zealous and distinguished *Lutheran*, will doubtless be considered as conclusive on this subject. He remarks, (Vol. iv. p. 287.) that “the internal government of the Lutheran church is equally removed from *Episcopacy* on the one hand, and “from *Presbyterianism* on the other; if we except the kingdoms “of *Sweden* and *Denmark*, who retain the form of ecclesiastical “government that preceded the reformation, purged, indeed, from “the superstition and abuses that rendered it so odious. This constitution of the Lutheran hierarchy will not seem surprising, when “the sentiments of that people with regard to ecclesiastical polity “are duly considered. On the one hand, they are persuaded that “there is no law of divine authority, which points out a distinction “between the ministers of the gospel, with respect to rank, dignity, “or prerogatives; and therefore they recede from *episcopacy*. “But, on the other hand, they are of opinion, that a certain subordination, a diversity in point of rank and privileges among the “clergy, are not only highly useful, but also necessary to the perfection of church communion, by connecting, in consequence of “a mutual dependence, more closely together the members of the “same body; and thus they avoid the uniformity of the *Presbyterian* government. They are not, however, agreed with respect “to the extent of this subordination and the degrees of superiority “and precedence that ought to distinguish their doctors; for in “some places this is regulated with much more regard to the “ancient rules of church government, than is discovered in others. “As the divine law is silent on this head, different opinions may be “entertained, and different forms of ecclesiastical polity adopted, “without a breach of christian charity, and fraternal union.”

In perfect correspondence with this representation, it is an undoubted fact, that the church of *England*, and those of the same sect in this country, consider the *Lutheran* church as being destitute of an authorized ministry, and her ordinations as completely a nullity as those in Presbyterian churches. You have seen, in our

own city, a Lutheran minister, on uniting himself with the Episcopal church, re-ordained,\* and the baptism of his children, which had been performed by the venerable senior of the Lutheran church in this State, pronounced invalid, and performed a second time by episcopal clergyman. If the *Lutherans* are *Episcopalians* in the same sense with the church of *England*, why treat their church with this pointed disrespect? If they have no claim to this title, why, for the purpose of endeavouring to support by the weight of numbers an unscriptural principle, is the contrary insinuated?

But although the Lutherans in *America* and in the south of *Europe* are not episcopal; perhaps it will be contended, that this form obtains among the Lutherans of *Sweden*. This plea, however, like the former, is altogether destitute of solidity. It is readily granted that the Lutheran churches in that kingdom have officers whom they style *bishops*; but when we examine the history and the principles of those churches with respect to their clergy, these bishops will be found to have no other character, according to the doctrine of the church of *England*, than that of mere *presbyters*. For, in the *first* place, all ecclesiastical historians agree, that when the reformation was introduced into *Sweden*, the first ministers who undertook to ordain were only *presbyters*. Their ministerial succession, of course, flowing through such a channel, cannot include any ecclesiastical dignity higher than that of *presbyter*. Further; in Swedish churches it is not only certain that *presbyters*, in the absence of those who are styled *bishops*, ordain common ministers, without a scruple; but it is equally certain, that in the ordination of a *bishop*, if the other bishops happen to be absent, the more grave and aged of the ordinary pastors supply their place, and are considered as fully invested with the ordaining power. Finally; the Swedish churches explicitly renounce all claim of *divine right* for their ecclesiastical government. They acknowledge that the Scriptures contain no warrant for more than *one order* of gospel ministers;† that their system rests on no other ground than *human expediency*; and that an adherence to it is by no means necessary either to the validity or regularity of christian ordinances.

\* The Rev. *George Strebeck*, late pastor of *Zion church*, in *Mott-street*; now minister of *St. Stephen's Church*, in the *Bowery*.

† The Swedish churches wholly discard *deacons* as an order of clergy.

Several of the foregoing remarks apply to the *United Brethren* or *Moravians*. They, indeed, have *Bishops* in their churches. But they explicitly renounce all claim of Divine *right* for their system. Of course, they utterly deny the *necessity* of Episcopal ordination in order to the institution of a valid ministry. And, in full consistency with this belief, they freely admit into their church, clergymen who have received no other than *Presbyterian* ordination, without requiring them to be re-ordained. They have, and have long had, a large number of this class actually incorporated with the rest of their clergy, and standing on a perfect level with those who have been ordained by their bishops.\*

Finally ; in order to swell the list of *episcopal* churches as much as possible, the *Methodist* church is frequently represented as such ; but how justly, a little examination will evince. Mr. *Wesley*, the venerable founder of that church, when he undertook, a number of years ago, to digest a plan for its external organization, especially in the *United States*, formally avowed himself to be of the opinion, with Lord Chancellor *King*, that *Bishop* and *Presbyter*, in the primitive church, were *the same*. And in perfect conformity with this belief, he himself, being only a *presbyter* in the church of *England*, united with other *presbyters* in ordaining ministers for his new church. These *presbyters* ordained the first *Methodist Bishops*, from whom all succeeding ordinations in that body have been derived. So that in the *Methodist* church, there is no other, strictly speaking, than *Presbyterian* ordination to the present hour. In consistency with this acknowledged fact, they receive, without re-ordination, ministers who have been ordained by *Presbyters* alone in other churches. They practise their own ordination, which is acknowledged by themselves to be no other than *Presbyterian*, in *Scotland*, where they are surrounded with Episcopal *Bishops*, whose ordination might be obtained, if it were deemed *necessary*. In a word, though, for the purposes of government, they have ministers of different titles and ranks; yet they neither possess, nor recognize any higher power than that of *Presbyters*. And, what confirms the representation I have given is, that when *Methodist* ministers consider it as their duty to enter

\* See *A Concise Historical Account of the Constitution of the Unitas Fratrum*. 8vo. Lond. 1775.

the Episcopal church, they are always laid under the necessity of practically renouncing their former orders, and submitting to be re-ordained.

If I mistake not, I have now demonstrated, that the whole body of the reformers, with scarcely any exceptions, agreed in maintaining that ministerial parity was the doctrine of scripture, and of the primitive church : That all the reformed churches, excepting that of *England*, were organized on this principle ; and that even those great men who finally settled her government and worship, did not consider prelacy as founded on *divine appointment*, but only as resting on the basis of *expediency*. In short, there is complete evidence, that the church of England stands *alone* in making *bishops* an order of clergy superior to *presbyters* ; nay, that *every other protestant church on earth*, has formally disclaimed the divine right of diocesan Episcopacy, and pronounced it to be a mere human invention.

Now is it credible, my brethren, that a body of *such* men as the early reformers ; men who to great learning, added the most exalted piety, zeal, and devotedness to the truth ; men who counted not their lives dear to them that they might maintain what appeared to them the purity of faith and order in the church ; is it credible that *such* men, living in different countries, embarrassed with different prejudices, all educated under the system of diocesan bishops, and all surrounded with ministers and people still warmly attached to this system : Is it credible, I say, that *such* men, thus situated, should, when left free to examine the scriptures and the early fathers on this subject, with almost perfect unanimity, agree in pronouncing prelacy to be a human invention, and ministerial parity to be the doctrine of scripture, if the testimony in favour of this opinion had not been perfectly clear and conclusive ? It is not credible. We may suppose *Calvin* and *Beza* to have embraced their opinions on this subject from prejudice, arising out of their situation ; but that *Luther*, *Melancthon*, and all the leading reformers on the continent of Europe, differently situated, and with different views on other points, should embrace the same opinion ; that *Cranmer*, *Grindal*, and other prelates in *Britain*, though partaking in the highest honours of an episcopal system, should entirely concur in that opinion ; that all this illustrious body of men, scattered through the whole protestant world, should agree

in declaring ministerial parity to be the doctrine of scripture and of the primitive church ; and all this from mere prejudice, in direct opposition to scripture, and early history, is one of the most incredible suppositions that can be formed by the human mind.

I repeat again, the question before us is not to be decided by *human* opinion, or by the *number* or *respectability* of the advocates which appear on either side. We are not to be governed by the judgment of *reformers*, or by the practice of the *churches* which they planted. But so far as these considerations have any weight, they are clearly and unquestionably on the side of Presbyterian parity.

## LETTER VII.

## CONCESSIONS OF EMINENT EPISCOPALIANS.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE concessions of opponents always carry with them peculiar weight. The opinions of Presbyterians, in this controversy, like the testimony of all men in their own favour, will of course be received with suspicion and allowance. But when decided and zealous Episcopalians; men who stand high as the defenders and the ornaments of Episcopacy; men whose prejudice and interest were all enlisted in the support of the episcopal system; when these are found to have conceded the main points in this controversy, they give us advantages of the most decisive kind. Some instances of this sort, I shall now proceed to state.

When I exhibit episcopal divines as making concessions in favour of our doctrine, none certainly will understand me as meaning to assert, that they were *Presbyterians* in principle. So far from this, the chief value of their concessions consists in being made by decided friends of Episcopacy. Neither will you understand me to assert, that none of these writers say any thing, in other parts of their works, inconsistent with these concessions. Few men who write and publish much, are at all times so guarded as never to be inconsistent with themselves. It is enough for me to know what language they employed, *when they undertook professedly to state their opinions on the subject before us*, and when they were called upon by every motive to write with caution and precision. You will likewise find most of these writers, differing among themselves; some taking higher ground, and others lower. For this you are doubtless prepared, after being informed that there are *three classes* of Episcopalians, as stated in my first letter.

Some of the concessions which might with propriety be here introduced, have been already exhibited in various parts of the foregoing letters. You have been told that Mr. *Dodwell* frankly



acknowledges that *bishops*, as an order superior to *presbyters*, are not to be found in the New Testament; that such an order had no existence till the beginning of the *second century*; that *presbyters* were the highest ecclesiastical officers left in commission by the apostles; and, of course, that the first diocesan *bishops* were ordained by *presbyters*. On the other hand, Dr. *Hammond*, perhaps the ablest advocate of prelacy that ever lived, warmly contends, that in the days of the apostles there were none but *bishops*; the *second* grade of ministers, now styled *presbyters*, not having been appointed till after the close of the canon of scripture. Now, if neither of these great men could find both *bishops* and *presbyters*, as different orders, in the New Testament; however ingeniously they endeavour to extricate themselves from the difficulty, it will amount, in the opinion of all the impartial, to a fundamental concession. In like manner you have seen, that the arguments drawn from the episcopal character of *Timothy* and *Titus*, from the model of the *Jewish Priesthood*, and from the *Angels* of the Asiatic churches, have been formally abandoned, and pronounced to be of no value, by some of the ablest champions of Episcopacy. The same might be proved with respect to all the arguments which are derived from scripture in support of the episcopal cause. But let us pass on to some more general concessions.

The *papists*, before as well as since the reformation, have been the warmest advocates for prelacy, that the church ever knew. Yet it would be easy to show, by a series of quotations, that many of the most learned men of that denomination, of different periods and nations, have held, and explicitly taught, that *bishops* and *presbyters* were the same in the primitive church; and that the difference between them, though deemed both useful and necessary, is only a *human institution*. But instead of a long list of authorities to establish this point, I shall content myself with producing *four*, the first *two* from *Great Britain*, and the others from the continent of *Europe*.

The judgment of the church of *England* on this subject, in the times of popery, we have in the canons of *Elfrick*, in the year 990, to Bishop *Wolfin*, in which bishops and presbyters are declared to be of *the same order*. To the same amount is the judgment of *Anselme*, archbishop of *Canterbury*, who died about the year 1109,

and who was perhaps the most learned man of the age in which he lived. He explicitly tells us, that, "by the apostolic institution, all *presbyters* are *bishops*." See his *Commentary on Titus and Philip*.

In the *canon law* we find the following decisive declaration "Bishop and *presbyter* were the same in the primitive church; "*presbyter* being the name of the person's age, and *bishop* of his office. But there being many of these in every church, they determined among themselves, for the preventing of schism, that one should be elected by themselves to be set over the rest; and the person so elected was called *bishop*, for distinction sake. The rest were called *presbyters*; and in process of time, their reverence for these titular bishops so increased, that they began to obey them as children do a father." *Just. Leg. Can.* I. 21.

*Cassander*, a learned catholic divine, who flourished in the 16th century, in his book of *Consultations*, Art. 14. has the following passage: "Whether *Episcopacy* is to be accounted an ecclesiastical order, distinct from *presbytery*, is a question much debated between theologues and canonists. But in this one particular, all parties agree. That in the apostles' days there was no difference between a *bishop* and a *presbyter*; but afterwards, for the avoiding of schism, the bishop was placed before the *presbyter*, to whom the power of ordination was granted, that so peace might be continued in the church."

It has been observed, that all the first reformers of the church of England, freely acknowledged *bishops* and *presbyters* to have been the same in the apostolic age; and only defended diocesan *Episcopacy* as a wise *human appointment*. It was asserted, on high episcopal authority, in the preceding letter, that Dr. *Bancroft*, then chaplain to Archbishop *Whitgift*, was the first protestant divine in *England*, who attempted to place *Episcopacy* on the foundation of divine right. In 1588, in a sermon delivered on a public occasion, he undertook to maintain, "that the bishops of *England* were a distinct order from priests, and had superiority over them by divine right, and directly from God; and that the denial of it was heresy." This sermon gave great offence to many of the clergy and laity. Among others, Sir *Francis Knollys*, much dissatisfied with the doctrine which it contained, wrote to Dr. *Raigolds*, professor of divinity in the University of *Oxford*,

for his opinion on the subject. That learned professor, who is said to have been the "oracle of the university in his day,"\* returned an answer, which, among other things, contains the following passages.

"Of the two opinions which your honour mentions in the sermon of Dr. *Bancroft*, the first is that which asserts the superiority which the prelates among us have over the clergy, to be a divine institution. He does not, indeed, assert this in express terms, but he does it by necessary consequence, in which he affirms the opinion of those that oppose that superiority to be an heresy; in which, in my judgment, he has committed an oversight; and I believe he himself will acknowledge it, if duly admonished concerning it. All that have laboured in reforming the church, for 500 years past, have taught that all pastors, be they entitled *bishops* or *priests*, have equal authority and power by *God's Word*; as first the *Waldenses*, next *Marsilius Petavinus*, then *Wickliffe* and his disciples; afterwards *Huss* and the *Hussites*; and last of all *Luther*, *Calvin*, *Brentius Bullinger*, and *Musculus*. Among ourselves we have *bishops*, the Queen's professors of divinity in our universities; and other learned men, as *Bradford*, *Lambert*, *Jewel*, *Pilkington*, *Humphreys*, *Fulke*, who all agree in this matter; and so do all divines beyond sea that I ever read, and doubtless many more whom I never read. But what do I speak of particular persons? It is the common judgment of the reformed Churches of *Helvetia*, *Savoy*, *France*, *Scotland*, *Germany*, *Hungary*, *Poland*, the *Low-Countries*, and our own, (the church of England). Wherefore, since Dr. *Bancroft* will certainly never pretend that an heresy, condemned by the consent of the whole church in its most flourishing times, was yet accounted a sound and christian doctrine by all these I have mentioned, I hope he will acknowledge that he was mistaken when he asserted the superiority

\* Professor *Rainolds* was acknowledged by all his contemporaries to be a prodigy of learning. Bishop *Hall* used to say, that his memory and reading were near a miracle. He was particularly conversant with the fathers and early historians; was a critic in the languages; was celebrated for his wit; and so eminent for piety and sanctity of life, that *Crakenthorp* said of him, that "to name *Rainolds* was to commend virtue itself."

“which bishops have among us over the clergy, to be *God’s own ordinance*.”\* Archbishop *Whitgift*, referring to the great attention which *Bancroft’s* sermon had excited, observed, that it “had done good ;” but added, that with respect to the offensive doctrine which it contained, he “rather *wished*, than *believed* it to be true.”

The same Archbishop *Whitgift*, in his book against *Cartwright*, has the following full and explicit declarations : Having distinguished between those things which are so necessary, that without them we cannot be saved ; and such as are so necessary, that without them we cannot *so well* and *conveniently* be saved, he adds, “I confess, that in a church collected together in one place, “and at liberty, government is necessary with the *second* kind of “necessity ; but that any kind of government is so necessary that “without it the church cannot be saved, or that it may not be “*altered* into some other kind, thought to be *more expedient*, I “*utterly deny*, and the reasons that move me so to do, be these : “the first is, because I find no one certain and perfect kind of “government prescribed or commanded in the scriptures, to the “church of Christ ; which, no doubt, should have been done, if it “had been a matter necessary to the salvation of the church. “There is no certain kind of government or discipline prescribed “to the church ; but the same may be altered, as the profit of the “churches requires.—I do deny that the scriptures do set down “any one certain kind of government in the church to be perpetual “for all times, places, and persons, without alteration.—It is well “known that the manner and form of government used in the “apostles’ time, and expressed in the scriptures, neither *is* now, “nor *can*, nor *ought* to be observed, *either touching the persons* “or the functions.\* We see manifestly, that, in sundry points,

\* See the letter at large in *Boyse on Episcopacy*, p. 13—19.

† It has been said that Archbishop *Whitgift*, in this passage, merely meant to say that *all the details of ecclesiastical discipline* are not laid down in scripture, nor to be considered as of *divine right*. But he utterly precludes this construction, by declaring that he considers no form of government as of unalterable divine appointment, *either with respect to persons or functions*. He could scarcely have employed language to express the opinion which we ascribe to him, more perspicuously or decisively.

“the government of the church used in the apostles’ time, *is*, and  
 “hath been of necessity, *altered*; and that it neither may nor can  
 “be revoked. Whereby it is plain, that any one kind of external  
 “government perpetually to be observed, is no where in the  
 “scripture prescribed to the church, but the charge thereof is left  
 “to the magistrate, so that nothing be done *contrary* to the word  
 “of God. This is the opinion of the best writers; *neither do I*  
 “*know any learned man of a contrary judgment.*”

Dr. Willet, a distinguished divine of the church of England, in the reign of *Elizabeth*, in his *Synopsis Papismi*, a large and learned work, dedicated to that Queen, undertakes professedly to deliver the opinion of his Church on the subject before us. Out of much which might be quoted, the following passages are sufficient for our purpose: “Every godly and faithful bishop is a  
 “successor of the apostles. We deny it not; and so are all  
 “faithful and godly pastors and ministers. For in respect of their  
 “extraordinary calling, miraculous gifts, and apostleship, the  
 “apostles have properly no successors; as Mr. Bembridge, the  
 “martyr saith, that he believed not bishops to be the successors of  
 “the apostles, for that they be not called as they were, nor have  
 “that grace. That, therefore, which the apostles were especially  
 “appointed unto, is the thing wherein the apostles were properly  
 “succeeded; but that was the preaching of the gospel: as St. Paul  
 “saith, he was sent to preach, not to baptize. The promise of suc-  
 “cession, we see, is in the preaching of the word, which appertain-  
 “eth as well to other pastors and ministers as to bishops.” Again;  
 “seeing in the apostles’ time *episcopus* and *presbyter*, a bishop  
 “and a priest, were neither in *name* nor *office* distinguished; it  
 “followeth, then, that either the apostles assigned no succession  
 “while they lived, neither appointed their successors; or that  
 “indifferently, all faithful pastors and preachers of the apostolic  
 “faith are the apostles’ successors.” *Controv. v. Quest. 3. p.*  
*232.* “Of the difference between bishops and priests, there are  
 “three opinions: the *first*, of *Aerius*, who did hold that all  
 “ministers should be equal; and that a bishop *was not*, neither  
 “*ought to be* superior to a priest. The *second* opinion is the  
 “other extreme of the papists, who would have not only a  
 “difference, but a princely pre-eminence of their bishops over the  
 “clergy, and that *by the word of God*. And they urge it to be so



“necessary, that they are no true churches which receive not their pontifical hierarchy. The *third* opinion is between both, that although this distinction of bishops and priests, as it is now received, *cannot be proved out of scripture* ; yet it is very necessary, for the policy of the church, to avoid schisms, and to preserve it in unity. Of this judgment, Bishop *Jewel* against *Harding*, sheweth both *Chrysostom*, *Ambrose*, and *Jerome*, to have been. *Jerome* thus writeth, ‘the apostle teaches evidently that bishops and priests were the same ; but that one was *afterwards* chosen to be set over the rest as a remedy against schism.’ To this opinion of St. *Jerome*, subscribeth bishop *Jewel*, and another most reverend prelate of our church, Archbishop *Whitgift*.” p. 273. Dr. *Willet* also expressly renounces the argument drawn by many Episcopalians from the *Jewish priesthood*. In answer to a celebrated popish writer, who had, with great confidence, adduced this argument, to support the authority of bishops, as an order superior to presbyters, he observes : *First*, “the *high priest* under the law was a figure of Christ, who is the high priest and chief Shepherd of the New Testament : and therefore this type, being fulfilled in Christ, cannot properly be applied to the external hierarchy of the church. *Secondly*, if every bishop be this high priest, then have you lost one of your best arguments for the Pope, whom you would have to be the high priest in the church.”\* This champion of the church of England further concedes : “That it may be doubted whether *Timothy* were so ordained by the apostle bishop of *Ephesus*, as a bishop is now set over his diocese ; for then the apostle would never have called him so often from his charge, sending him to the *Corinthians*, to the *Thessalonians*, and to other churches beside. It is most likely that *Timothy* had the place and calling of an *Evangelist*.” Again ; “Seeing that *Timothy* was ordained by the authority of the *eldership*, how could he be a bishop strictly and precisely taken, being ordained by *presbyters* ?” p. 273. Dr. *Willet* also formally gives up the claim that diocesan bishops

\* It will be observed, that this zealous Episcopalian not only rejects the argument in favour of prelacy, drawn from the model of the *Jewish Priesthood*, but also declares it to be a *popish* argument, and of no value excepting on *popish* principles.



are *peculiarly* the successors of the apostles ; explicitly conceding that all who preach the gospel, and administer sacraments, are equally entitled to this honour. And, to place his opinion beyond all doubt, he observes, “ Although it cannot be denied but that the “ government of bishops is very profitable for the preserving of “ unity ; yet we dare not condemn the churches of *Geneva*, “ *Helvetia*, *Germany*, *Scotland*, that have received another form “ of ecclesiastical government ; as the papists proudly affirm all “ churches which have not such bishops as theirs are, to be no “ true churches. But so do not our bishops and archbishops, “ which is a notable difference between the bishops of the popish “ church, and of the reformed churches. Wherefore, as we *con-* “ *demn not* those reformed churches which have retained another “ form of ecclesiastical government ; so neither are they to censure “ our church for holding still the ancient regimen of bishops, “ purged from the ambitious and superstitious inventions of the “ popish prelacy.” p. 276.

Bishop *Bilson*, in his work against *Seminaries*, lib. I. p. 318, delivers it as his opinion, and confirms it by quotations from *Jerome*, that “ the church was at first governed by the common council of “ presbyters ; that therefore bishops must understand that they are “ greater than presbyters, rather by *custom* than the *Lord’s appoint-* “ *ment* ; and that bishops came in *after* the Apostle’s time.”

Dr. *Holland*, the King’s professor of divinity in the University of *Oxford*, at a public academical exercise, in the year 1608, in answer to a question formally and solemnly proposed—*An episcopatus sit ordo distinctus a presbyteratu, eoque superior jure divino?* i. e. *Whether the office of bishop be different from that of presbyter, and superior to it, by divine right*, declared that “ to affirm “ that there is such a difference and superiority, by divine right, “ is most false, contrary to Scripture, to the fathers, to the doctrine “ of the church of *England*, yea to the very schoolmen themselves.”

Bishop *Morton*, in his *Catholic Apology*, addressed to the papists, lib. I. tells them “ that the powers of *order* and *jurisdiction*, which “ they ascribe to bishops, doth by divine right belong to all other “ presbyters ; and that to ordain is their ancient right.” He further asserts, that *Jerome* does not represent the difference between bishop and presbyter as of divine institution. He assents to the opinion of *Medina* the Jesuit, and declares that there was no substantial

difference on the subject of episcopacy between *Jerome* and *Acrius*. He avers, further, that not only all the protestants, but also all the primitive doctors were of *Jerome's* mind. And, finally, he concludes, that according to the harmonious consent of all men in the apostolic age, there was no difference between bishop and presbyter; but that this difference was *afterwards* introduced for the removal of *schism*.

Bishop *Jewel*, one of the most illustrious advocates for diocesan episcopacy, in the *Defence of his Apology for the Church of England* against *Harding*, p. 248, has the following remarkable passage. "But what meant *M. Harding* to come in here with the difference between *priests* and *bishops*? Thinketh he that *priests* and *bishops* hold only by tradition? Or is it so horrible an heresy as he maketh it, to say, that by the Scriptures of God, a bishop and a priest are *all one*? Or knoweth he how far, and to, whom he reacheth the name of an heretic? Verily *Chrysostom* saith, *Inter episcopum, et presbyterum interest fere nihil*. i. e. 'between a bishop and a priest there is, in a manner, no difference.' St. *Jerome* saith, somewhat in rougher sort, *Audio, quendam in tantam eripuisse vecordiam, ut diaconos presbyteris, id est, episcopis ante ferret: cum Apostolus perspicuè doceat, eosdem esse presbyteros quos episcopos*. i. e. 'I hear say, there is one become so peevish, that he setteth deacons before priests, that is to say, bishops; whereas the Apostle plainly teacheth us, that priests and bishops be all one.' St. *Augustine* also saith, *Quid est episcopus nisi primus presbyter, hoc est summus sacerdos*? i. e. 'What is a bishop, but the first priest, that is to say, the highest priest?' So saith St. *Ambrose*, *episcopi et presbyteri una ordinatio est; uterque, enim, sacerdos est, sed episcopus primus est*. i. e. There is but one consecration of priest and bishop; for both of them are priests, but the bishop is the first. All these, and other more holy fathers, together with St. *Paul*, the Apostle, for thus saying, by *M. Harding's* advice, must be holden for heretics."\*

\* It ought to be kept in mind, that Bishop *Jewel's Apology for the Church of England* was laid before the public on the avowed principle, that it contained the *doctrine of that church*: and that the work from which the above quotation is made, was ordered to be suspended by a chain, in all the churches in the kingdom, and to be publicly read as a standard of theological instruction. *Strype's Annals*, II. 100.

Dr. *Whitaker*, a learned divine of the church of *England*, and professor of divinity in the University of *Cambridge*, in his treatise against *Campion*, the Jesuit, affirms, that *bishop* and *presbyter* are, by *divine right*, all one. And, in answer to *Dury*, a zealous hierarchist of *Scotland*, he tells him “ that, whereas he asserts, with “ many words, that *bishop* and *presbyter* are *divers*, if he will “ retain the character of a *modest* divine, he must not so confidently affirm, that which *all men see to be so evidently false*. For “ what is so well known, says he, as this which you acknowledge “ not? *Jerome* plainly writeth that *elders* and *bishops* are the “ same, and confirmeth it by many places of Scripture.” The same celebrated Episcopalian, in writing against *Bellarmino*, says, “ From 2 *Tim.* i. 6, we understand that *Timothy* had hands laid “ on him by *presbyters*, who, at that time governed the church “ in common council ;” and then proceeds to speak severely of *Bellarmino* and the Romish church for confining the power of ordination to bishops exclusively of presbyters.

The authority of few men stands higher among the friends of prelacy, than that of Bishop *Hall*, who wrote, and otherwise exerted himself, in favour of the divine right of diocesan episcopacy, with as much zeal and ability as any man of his day. Yet this eminently learned and pious divine, acknowledged the reformed church of *Holland*, where there never have been any diocesan bishops, to be a true church of Christ ; accepted of a seat in the Synod of *Dort*, in which the articles of faith, and form of government of that church were settled ; recognised the deputies from all the reformed churches on the continent, none of whom had received episcopal ordination, as regular ministers of Christ ; and, when he took leave of the Synod, declared that “ there was no place upon “ earth so like Heaven as the Synod of *Dort*, and where he should “ be more willing to dwell.” *Brandt’s Hist.* Sess. 62. The following extract of a sermon which he delivered in Latin before that venerable Synod, contains a direct and unequivocal acknowledgment of the church of *Holland* as a true church of Christ. It was delivered Nov. 29, 1618 ; and founded on *Eccles.* vii. 16. “ His serene majesty, our King *James*, in his excellent letter, “ admonishes the States General, and in his instructions to us hath “ expressly commanded us, to urge this with our whole might, to “ inculcate this one thing, that you all continue to adhere to the

“common faith, and the confession of your own and the other  
 “churches : which if you do, O happy *Holland* ! O chaste  
 “Spouse of Christ ! O prosperous Republic ! this your afflicted  
 “Church tossed with the billows of differing opinions, will  
 “yet reach the harbour, and safely smile at all the storms excited  
 “by her cruel adversaries. That this may at length be obtained,  
 “let us seek for the things which make for peace. We are  
 “*brethren* ; let us also be *Colleagues* ! What have we to do with  
 “the infamous titles of party names ? We are Christians ; let us  
 “also be of the same mind. We are *one body* ; let us also be  
 “unanimous. By the tremendous name of the omnipotent God ;  
 “by the pious and loving bosom of our common Mother ; by your  
 “own souls ; by the holy bowels of Jesus Christ our Saviour, my  
 “brethren, seek peace ; pursue peace.” See the whole in the  
 “*Acta Synodi Nat. Dord.* 38. But this excellent prelate went  
 further. A little more than twenty years after his mission to  
*Holland*, and when he had been advanced to the bishoprick of  
*Norwich*, he published his *Irenicum* (or *Peacemaker*), in which we  
 find the following passage, *Sect.* VI. “Blessed be God, there is no  
 “difference, in any essential point, between the church of *England*,  
 “and her sister reformed churches. We unite in every article of  
 “christian doctrine, without the least variation, as the full and  
 “absolute agreement between their public confessions and ours  
 “testifies.\* The only difference between us consists in our *mode*  
 “of constituting the external ministry ; and even with respect to  
 “this point we are of one mind, because we all profess to believe  
 “that it is not an *essential* of the church, (though in the opinion of  
 “many it is a matter of importance to her well being ;) and we all  
 “retain a respectful and friendly opinion of each other, not seeing  
 “any reason why *so small a disagreement* should produce any  
 “alienation of affection among us.” And after proposing some  
 common principles on which they might draw more closely  
 together, he adds, “But if a difference of opinion with regard to

\* It has long been maintained by well informed persons, that the  
 fathers, or the most distinguished reformers of the church of *England*  
 were doctrinal *Calvinists* ; and that the thirty-nine *Articles* of that church  
 drawn up by them are *Calvinistic*. If there were any remaining doubt  
 with respect to the accuracy of this representation, the opinion of Bishop  
*Hall*, here so strongly expressed, would be decisive in its support.

“ these points of external order must continue, why may we not be  
 “ of *one heart and of one mind* ? or why should this disagreement  
 “ break the bonds of good brotherhood ?” How different the language and the spirit of some modern advocates for the divine right of diocesan episcopacy !

The same practical concession was made by the eminently learned and pious Bishop *Davenant*, while professor of divinity in the university of *Cambridge*. He accepted of a seat in the synod of *Dort*, and gave the sanction of his presence and aid in organizing the Presbyterian church of *Holland*. We are informed, indeed, that Bishop *Carleton*, and the other English delegates, expressed their opinions very fully in the synod, in favour of the Episcopal form of government: but their sitting in that body and assisting in its deliberations ; their preaching in the pulpits of the Presbyterian ministers of *Dort*, and attending on all the public religious services of the synod, were among the strongest acknowledgments they could make, that they considered the ministrations of non-episcopal ministers as valid. But Bishop *Davenant* went further. After his advancement to the bishoprick of *Salisbury*, he published a work, in which he urged with much earnestness and force, a fraternal union among *all the reformed churches*.\* A plan which, it is obvious, involved in it an explicit acknowledgment that the foreign reformed churches, most of which were Presbyterian, were true churches of Christ ; and which, indeed, contained in its very title, a declaration that those churches “ did not differ from “ the church of *England* in any fundamental article of Christian “ faith.”

Bishop *Croft*'s concessions on this subject are equally candid and decisive. I had occasion in a former letter to take notice of an acknowledgment of the most pointed sort in his work, entitled *Naked Truth*, a work written and published while the author was bishop of *Hereford*, and powerfully defended by some of the most learned men of his day. The following additional passages from the same work deserve our notice. “ The scripture no where “ expresses any distinction of order among the elders. We find

\* *Ad Fraternal Communionem inter Evangelicas Ecclesias restaurandam Adhortatio; in eo fundata, Quod non dissentiant in ullo Fundamentalium Catholicæ Fidei Articulo. Cantab. 1640.*

“there but *two* orders mentioned, bishops and deacons. The “scripture distinguisheth not the order of bishops and priests ; for “there we find but one kind of ordination, then certainly but one “order ; for two distinct orders cannot be conferred in the same “instant, by the same words, by the same actions.” With respect to the office of *deacon*, this bishop entirely coincides with scripture and the Presbyterian church. In the work above mentioned, (p. 49.) he remarks that he will not dispute, “Whether this of *deaconship* be properly to be called an *order* or an *office*, but “certainly no *spiritual* order ; for their office was to *serve tables*, “as the Scripture phrases it, which in plain English, is nothing else “but *overseers of the poor*, to distribute justly and discreetly the “alms of the faithful, which the apostles would not trouble themselves withal, lest it should hinder them in the ministration of the “word and prayer. But as most matters of this world, in process “time, deflect much from the original constitution, so it fell out in “this business ; for the bishops who pretended to be successors to “the apostles, by little and little, took to themselves the dispensation of alms, first by way of inspection over the deacons, but at “length the total management : and the deacons, who were mere “lay-officers, by degrees crept into the church ministration, and “became a reputed spiritual order, and a necessary degree and “step to the priesthood, of which I can find nothing in scripture, “and the original institution, nor a word relating to any thing but “the ordering of alms for the poor.”

Lord George Digby, an eminent English nobleman, who flourished in the reigns of *Charles I.* and *Charles II.* and who wrote largely on the questions which agitated the church in his day, in a letter to Sir *Kenelm Digby*, on the subject before us, expresses himself in the following terms:—“He that would reduce the “church *now*, to the form of government in the most *primitive* “times, would not take, in my opinion, the best nor wisest course ; “I am sure not the safest : for he would be found pecking towards “the *presbytery* of *Scotland*, which, for my part, I believe, in “point of government, hath a greater resemblance than either “yours or ours, to the *first age*, and yet it is never a whit the “better for it ; since it was a form not chosen for the best, but “imposed by adversity under oppression, which, in the beginning, “forced the church from what it wished, to what it might ; not



“suffering that dignity and state ecclesiastical which rightly  
 “belonged unto it, to manifest itself to the world:—and which,  
 “soon afterwards, upon the least lucid intervals, shone forth so  
 “gloriously in the happier as well as more monarchical condition  
 “of Episcopacy : of which way of government I am so well per-  
 “suaded that I think it pity it was not made betimes an article of  
 “the *Scottish Catechism*, that bishops are of divine right.”\*

The character of Archbishop *Usher* stands high with Episcop-  
 alians. He was one of the greatest and best of men. His plan  
 for the *reduction of Episcopacy into the form of Synodical*  
*government, received in the Ancient Church*, is well known to  
 every one who is tolerably versed in the ecclesiastical history of  
*England*. The essential principle of that plan is, that *bishop* and  
*presbyter*, were originally the same order ; and that in the primi-  
 tive church, the bishop was only a standing *president* or *moderator*  
 among his fellow presbyters. To guard against the possibility of  
 mistake, the illustrious prelate declared he meant to restore  
 “that kind of *Presbyterian government*, which, in the church of  
 “*England*, had *long been disused*.” The archbishop, further,  
 “being asked by *Charles I.* in the *Isle of Wight*, whether he found  
 “in antiquity that *presbyters alone ordained any* ?” answered,  
 “*Yes*, and that he could show his Majesty more, even where  
 “*presbyters* alone successively ordained *bishops*, and brought  
 “as an instance of this, the presbyters of *Alexandria* choosing and  
 “making their own bishops, from the days of *Mark*, till *Heraclas*  
 “and *Dionysius*.” The following declaration of the same learned  
 dignitary, is also full to our purpose. It having been reported of  
 him, that he had expressed an uncharitable opinion concerning the  
 church of *Holland*, as no true church, because she was without  
 diocesan bishops, when they were within her reach, if she had  
 chosen to accept them, he thus repels the calumny : “I have ever  
 “declared my opinion to be, that *bishop* and *presbyter* differ only  
 “in *degree*, and not in order ; and consequently, that in places  
 “where bishops cannot be had, the ordination by presbyters  
 “standeth valid. Yet, on the other side, holding, as I do, that a  
 “bishop hath superiority in degree over a presbyter, you may  
 “easily judge, that the ordination made by such presbyters, as

\* *Jus Divinum Minis. Evang.* II. p. 107.

“have severed themselves from those bishops unto whom *they had*  
 “*sworn canonical obedience*, cannot possibly by me be excused  
 “from being *schismatical*. And howsoever, I must needs think,  
 “that the churches which have no bishops, are thereby become  
 “very much defective in their government, and that the churches  
 “in *France*, who, living under a popish power, cannot do what  
 “they would, are more excusable in this defect, than the *Low*  
 “*Countries*, who live under a free state ; yet, for the testifying of  
 “my communion with these churches, (which I do love and honour  
 “as true members of the church universal,) I do profess, that with  
 “like affection I should receive the blessed sacrament at the hands  
 “of the *Dutch* ministers, if I were in *Holland*, as I should do at  
 “the hands of the *French* ministers, if I were in *Charenton*.”\*

Bishop *Forbes*, a zealous Episcopalian, in his *Irenicum*, Lib.  
 “II. cap. xi. Prop. 13. expresses himself thus : “Presbyters  
 “have, by divine right, the power of *ordaining*, as well as of  
 “preaching and baptizing. They ought, indeed, to exercise this  
 “function under the inspection and government of a bishop, in  
 “places where there *are* bishops. But in other places, where the  
 “government of the church is administered by the common coun-  
 “sel of presbyters alone, that ordination is valid and effectual  
 “which is performed by the imposition of the hands of presbyters  
 “alone.” In confirmation of this doctrine, Bishop *Forbes* quotes  
 two passages from the fathers. The *first* is from *Hilary*,  
 (*Ambrose*,) who, he says, tells us, in his commentary on the Ephe-  
 sians, that in *Egypt*, presbyters *ordain* if a bishop be not present ;  
 which passage in *Hilary* he interprets precisely as I have done, in  
 a preceding letter. The *second* is from *Augustine*, who, he informs  
 us, declares, that in *Alexandria*, and through the whole of *Egypt*,  
 if a bishop be not present, presbyters ordain. Again, he says :  
 “From all these things, it is manifest, that, in the ancient church,  
 “it was lawful for presbyters alone, if bishops were not present, to  
 “ordain presbyters and deacons ; and such ordinations were held  
 “to be valid, although it was *prudently* appointed, for the preser-  
 “vation of discipline, that this should not be done without the  
 “consent of a bishop. That is to say, in those places in which  
 “there *were* bishops, it was held to be criminal to despise their

\* See the judgment of the late Archbishop of Armagh, 110—123

“ authority. But in those places in which presbyters only governed  
 “ the church, it was sufficient to stamp validity upon an ordination  
 “ that it be performed under the authority of an assembly, or bench  
 “ of presbyters.”

The concessions of Dr. *Stillingfleet*, (afterwards bishop of *Worcester*) on this subject are well known. The avowed object of his *Irenicum*, one of the most learned works of the age in which it appeared, was to show, that no form of church government is prescribed in the word of God ; that the church is at liberty to modify the details of her external order, both with respect to officers and functions, as well as discipline, at pleasure ; and of course, that ordinations and government by presbyters are equally valid with those administered by diocesan bishops. He seems to acknowledge, indeed, that Presbyterian parity, is on the whole, more agreeable to scripture, and to the practice of the primitive church, than prelacy ; but, at the same time, denies that this ought to be considered as establishing the divine right of presbytery. In the course of this work, the learned author exhibits a mass of evidence from scripture and primitive antiquity against the episcopal claims, and quotes declarations made by some of the most distinguished divines of different ages and denominations, which will doubtless be read with surprise by those who have been accustomed to believe that the whole Christian world, with very little exception, has always been episcopal.

To destroy the force of Dr. *Stillingfleet's* concessions, it is urged, that he afterwards became *dissatisfied* with this work, and *retracted* the leading opinion which it maintains.\* To this suggestion I will

\* The *Irenicum* has been stigmatized by some high-toned Episcopalians, as an hasty, indigested work, written at an early period of the author's life, and soon repented of. The following facts will show how far this representation is correct. After having been several years engaged in the composition of this work, the author published it in 1659, at the age of twenty-four. Three years afterwards, viz. in 1662, he published a *second edition* ; and the same year, he gave to the world his *Origines Saceræ*. Soon after these publications, he met his diocesan, the celebrated Bishop *Saunderson*, at a visitation. The bishop seeing so young a man, could hardly believe it was *Stillingfleet*, whom he had hitherto known only by his writings; and, after having embraced him, said, *he much rather expected to have seen one as considerable for his age as he had already*

reply, by a quotation from Bishop *White* of *Pennsylvania*, who, in a pamphlet published a few years since, having occasion to adduce the *Irenicum* as an authority against high church notions, speaks of the performance and its author in the following terms : “ As that learned prelate was afterwards dissatisfied with his work, “ (though most probably not with that part of it which would have “ been to our purpose,) it might seem uncandid to cite the author- “ ity of his *opinion*. Bishop *Burnet*, his cotemporary and friend, “ says, (*History of his own Times*, anno 1661,) To avoid the “ imputation that book brought on him, he went into the humours “ of an high sort of people, beyond what became him, perhaps “ beyond his own sense of things.” “ The book, however,” Bishop *White* adds, “ was, it seems, easier *retracted* than *refuted* ; for “ though offensive to many of both parties, it was managed, (says “ the same author,) with so much learning and skill, that none of “ either side ever undertook to answer it.”

The truth seems to be, that Dr. *Stillingfleet*, finding that the opinions of a number of influential men in the church were different from those which he had advanced in this work ; and finding also that a fixed adherence to them might be adverse to the interests of the established church, in which he sought preferment, he made a kind of vague and feeble recantation ; and wrote in favour of the apostolic origin of Episcopacy. It is remarkable, however, that this prelate, in answer to an accusation of inconsistency between his early and his latter writings on this subject, assigned another reason besides a change of opinion, viz. that the former were written “ *before the laws were established.*” But in whatever degree his *opinion* may have been altered, his *reasonings* and *authorities* have undergone no change. They remain in all their force, and have never been refuted, either by himself, or by others.

*shown himself for his learning.* See the Life of Bishop *Stillingfleet*, p. 12—16. When a divine of acknowledged talents and learning, (whatever may be his age,) after spending several years in a composition of moderate length, deliberately commits it to the press; when, after reflecting on the subject, and hearing the remarks of his friends for three years longer, he publishes it a second time; and when, after this second publication, he is complimented for his great erudition, by one of the most able and learned dignitaries of the age, there seems little room for a charge of haste or want of digestion.

The concessions of Bishop *Burnet* on this subject, are numerous and unequivocal. Several have been already mentioned. Out of many more which might be presented, I select the following declaration: "I acknowledge *bishop* and *presbyter* to be *one* and the *same office*, and so plead for no new office-bearer in the church. "The first branch of their power is their authority to publish the Gospel, to manage the worship, and dispense the sacraments; and "this is all that is of divine right in the ministry, in which *bishops* and *presbyters* are equal sharers. But besides this, the church "claimeth a power of jurisdiction, of making rules for discipline, "and applying and executing the same; all which is, indeed, "suitable to the common laws of society, and the general rules of Scripture, but hath no positive warrant from any Scripture precept. And all these constitutions of churches into Synods, and "the canons of discipline taking their rise from the divisions of the "world into several provinces, and beginning in the second, and "beginning of the third century, do clearly show, that they can be "derived from no divine original, and so were, as to their particular "form, but of human institution."\*

The opinions held by Archbishop *Tillotson*, on this subject, substantially agree with those of Bishop *Burnet*; or, if they differ from them, are even more favourable to Presbyterian church government. He was decidedly in favour of admitting the dissenting clergy into the church of *England*, without re-ordaining them; and did not scruple to avow that he considered their ordination as equally valid with that which was received from episcopal bishops. And, in conformity with this opinion, he advised the episcopal clergy of *Scotland* to unite with the Presbyterian church in that country, and submit to its government.†

Archbishop *Wake*, who was a warm friend to prelacy, and whose character stands high with its advocates, it is well known kept up a constant friendly correspondence with the most eminent pastors and professors in *Geneva* and *Holland*; manifested a fraternal regard to them; declared their churches, notwithstanding

\* *Vindication of the church and state of Scotland*, p. 331.

† See *Remarks upon the Life of the most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, 8vo. 1754; in which the author, a most violent Episcopalian, acknowledges these facts, and loads him with much abuse on account of them.

ing their difference in discipline and government from his own, to be true churches of Christ ; and expressed a warm desire for their union with the church of England, at the head of which he was then placed. In a letter which he wrote to the celebrated *Le Clerc*, of the *Genevan* school, then residing in *Holland*, in the year 1719, there is the following passage. "I freely embrace the reformed churches, notwithstanding they differ in some respects from that of England. I could wish, indeed, they had retained that moderate episcopacy, freed from all unjust domination, which obtains among us, and which, if I have any skill in judging on this subject, was received in the church, from the apostolic age. Nor do I despair of its being restored. If I should not see it myself, posterity will. In the mean time, I am so far from being so uncharitable as to believe that any of those churches, on account of this defect, (for so I must be allowed, without invidiousness, to call it) ought to be cut off from our communion ; nor can I, by any means, join with certain MAD writers among us, in denying the validity of their sacraments, and in calling in question their right to the name of Christian churches.\* I could wish to bring about, at any price, a more close union between all the reformed churches." The same prelate, in a letter to Professor *Turretin*, of *Geneva*, in 1718, speaking of Bishop *Davenant's* conciliatory opinions, declares that they perfectly coincide with his own, and that he could earnestly wish that all Christians were of the same mind. Another letter, of a more public nature, which he afterwards addressed to the pastors and professors of *Geneva*, abounds with similar sentiments, and expresses the most fraternal affection for those Presbyterian worthies.† Nor were these letters written by him merely as a private man, or in the spirit of temporizing politeness ; but manifestly with all the

\* The language employed by the good archbishop to express his disapprobation of this doctrine is remarkably strong and pointed. He calls those writers who attempt to maintain it, *furiosi*, i. e. *madmen*. If he spoke in this style of such writers in *England*, where diocesan episcopacy was established by law, and when he was himself at the head of that establishment; what would he have said concerning writers of a similar stamp, at the present day in *America*, where all denominations, with respect to the state, stand on a level ?

† See *Appendix III.* to *Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History.*



deliberation and solemnity of a man who felt his official responsibility.

The learned *Joseph Bingham*, who has written largely and ably in defence of the episcopacy of the church of England, frankly acknowledges, that "that church does by no means damn or cut off from her communion, those who believe bishops and presbyters to be the *same order*. Some of our best episcopal divines, and true sons of the church of England, *have said the same*, distinguishing between *order* and *jurisdiction*, and made use of this doctrine and distinction to justify the ordinations of the reformed churches, against the Romanists."\* *French Church's Apol.* p. 262.

Dr. *John Edwards*, a learned and respectable divine of the church of England, in a treatise on this subject, after having considered the testimonies of *Clement, Ignatius, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Jerome*, and others, makes the following declaration. "From all these we may gather that the scripture *bishop* was the chief of the *presbyters*; but he was not of a *distinct order* from them. And as for the times after the apostles, none of these writers, nor any ecclesiastical historian, tells us, that a person of an order superior to presbyters was set over the presbyters. It is true one single person is recorded to have presided over the college of presbyters, but this college had the same power with the single person, though not the particular dignity of presidentship. The short is, the *bishops* in these times were *presbyters*; only he that presided over the body of presbyters was called *bishop*, while the rest were generally known by the title of *presbyters*; and the bishop was still but a presbyter, as to order and function, though, for distinction sake, he was known by the name of *bishop*. He was superior to the other presbyters as long as he executed his office, as a chairman in a committee is above the rest of the justices whilst he holds that place. It was generally the most ancient presbyter that was chosen to preside over the college of presbyters, but he had no superiority of power. All the priority or primacy he had was

\* It will be distinctly remembered, that all the reformed Churches, excepting that of *England*, admitted and practised ordination by *presbyters*.

“that of order. Here is the ancient pattern. Why is it not followed? To single fathers, we may add councils, who deliver the same sense. This, then, is the true account of the matter. Bishops were elders or presbyters, and therefore of the same order; but the bishops differed from the presbyters in this only, that they were chosen by the elders to preside over them at their ecclesiastical meetings or assemblies.† But in after ages, the presbyters of some churches parted with their liberty and right, and agreed among themselves that ecclesiastical matters should be managed by the bishop only.” *Edwards’ Remains*, p. 253.

Sir *Peter King*, lord chancellor of *England*, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, published a very learned work, entitled, *An Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship, of the Primitive Church, that flourished within the first 300 years after Christ*. In this work his lordship undertakes to show, “that a *presbyter*, in the primitive church, meant a person in holy orders, having thereby an inherent right to perform the whole office of a bishop, and differing from a bishop in nothing, but in having no parish, or pastoral charge.” He further shows, that presbyters, in those times of primitive purity, were called by the same titles, and were of the same specific order with bishops; that they ruled in those churches to which they belonged; that they presided in church consistories with the bishop; that they had the power of excommunication, and of restoring penitents; that they confirmed; and that there are clearer proofs of presbyters ordaining, than of their administering the Lord’s Supper.” The same learned author maintains that there were but two orders of church officers, instituted by the authority of Christ, viz. *bishops* and *deacons*: “and if they ordained but two,” adds he, “I think no one had ever a commission to add a third, or to split one into

\* Here is an explicit acknowledgment, that the episcopacy of the Church of England, and *primitive episcopacy*, are very different things.

† The *primitive* bishop, in Dr. *Edwards’* judgment, therefore, corresponds exactly with the *moderator* or *president*, of our presbyteries, who is a standing officer, elected at stated periods, who always presides at the meetings of the body to which he belongs, and until a successor is chosen.

“two, as must be done, if we separate the order of presbyters from the order of bishops.”

Dr. *Haweis*, an eminent clergyman of the Church of *England*, now living, in the *Introduction* to his *Ecclesiastical History*, makes the following decided avowal. “Having, through divine mercy, obtained grace to be faithful—having in Providence received my education, and been called to minister in the church of *England*, I have embraced and subscribed her articles, *ex animo*, and have continued to prefer an episcopal mode of government. But disclaiming all *exclusive* pretensions, and joined to the Lord in one spirit, with all the faithful of every denomination, I candidly avow my conviction, that the true church is *catholic*, or universal; not monopolized by any one body of professing christians, but essentially a *spiritual church*; and consisting only and equally of those who, in every denomination, love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Respecting the *administration* of this church, I am not convinced that the Lord of life and glory left any precise regulations. His kingdom could alike subsist under any species of government; and having nothing to do with this world, was, in externals, to be regulated by existing circumstances. Whether Episcopacy, Presbytery, or the congregational order, be established as the dominant profession, it affects not the body of Christ. The living members, under each of these modes of administration, are alike bound to love one another out of a pure heart fervently; to indulge their brethren in the same liberty of private judgment which they exercise themselves; and ought never to suffer these regulations of outward order to destroy the unity of the spirit, or to break the bonds of peace.”

The Rev. Mr. *Gisborne*, a distinguished and popular writer, of the Church of *England*, also now living, avows opinions nearly similar to those contained in the preceding quotation. In his *Survey of the Christian Religion*, (chapter xii.) he has the following passage. “If Christ, or his apostles, enjoined the uniform adoption of episcopacy, the question is decided. Did Christ then, or his disciples, deliver, or indirectly convey, such an injunction? This topic has been greatly controverted. The fact appears to be this: that the Saviour did not pronounce upon the subject; that the apostles uniformly established a bishop in every district,

“as soon as the Church in that district became numerous; and thus  
“clearly evinced *their judgment*, as to the form of ecclesiastical  
“government most advantageous, at least *in those days*, to christi-  
“anity; but that they left no command which rendered episcopacy  
“universally indispensable in future times, if other forms should  
“evidently promise, through local opinions and circumstances  
“greater benefit to religion. SUCH IS THE GENERAL SENTIMENT  
“OF THE PRESENT CHURCH OF ENGLAND ON THE SUBJECT.”

An eminent layman of the church of *England*, in a work lately published, in the course of some excellent advices for promoting the prosperity of that church, expressly reprobates the exclusive claims for which some zealous hierarchists contend, and pronounces them most mischievous in their operation on the interests of religion. Among many pertinent and judicious remarks on this subject, he makes the following. “A general presumption lies  
“against all extraordinary claims; and on this account, the oppo-  
“sition which is commonly made to them, (though previous to  
“examination) is not absolutely unreasonable. They are marks  
“by which the weakest persons, as well as the weakest causes, are  
“particularly distinguished. In this kind of competition, the em-  
“piric, the pedant, and the sophist, will far outstrip the skilful  
“physician, the able scholar, and the profound philosopher. The  
“same observation is applicable to bodies of men, ecclesiastical  
“as well as civil. Hence the high claims of the Romish church  
“afford the protestants one of their most legitimate presumptions  
“against her. From her claim of right to an absolute dictatorial  
“authority, we presume the contrary; from her claim to *apostolic*  
“*purity* in her faith, worship, government, and discipline, we  
“presume upon her corruption in each. From her denial of sal-  
“vation to those that are without her pale, we presume it to be  
“peculiarly hazardous to be found within it. Thus by her ambi-  
“tious or fanatical endeavours to exalt herself above other churches,  
“she supplies them, and her adversaries in general, with a forcible  
“plea against herself.” Again: “Suppose a church to give a  
“decided preference to episcopal government, not considering it  
“as absolutely essential to her being, but as conducive to her well-  
“being; not as indispensably *necessary*, but *expedient*; and this  
“chiefly in respect to her own edification, without any positive  
“determination as to other churches; it is almost impossible that

“ a preference thus qualified should occasion any contest or animosity. But if she assert such a government to be of indispensable *divine right*, and set up a claim which nullifies the sacraments and administrations of other churches, *she must expect to encounter the most violent opposition*. On the other hand, should a church, on account of the parity of her ministers, exalt herself above other churches, and look down on the episcopal order, in its most primitive state, as something popish and antichristian ; she can hardly fail, by such an extravagance, to diminish her credit with all impartial by-standers.”\*

The opinions and the declarations of Dr. *White*, the present bishop of the episcopal churches in *Pennsylvania*, will have weight with all Episcopalians. In a pamphlet published by him, a few years ago, entitled, *The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States considered*, the principal object of which was to recommend a temporary departure from the line of episcopal succession, on the ground that bishops could not then be had, we find the following passage. p. 28. “ Now if even those who hold episcopacy to be of divine right, conceive the obligation to it not to be binding when that idea would be destructive of public worship ; much more must *they* think so, who indeed venerate and prefer that form as the most ancient and eligible, but *without any idea of divine right in the case*. This the author believes to be the sentiment of the great body of Episcopalians in *America* ; in which respect they have in their favour, *unquestionably*, the sense of the church of *England* ; and, *as he believes*, the opinions of her most distinguished prelates for piety, virtue, and abilities.”\*

Another instance of concession from an eminent Episcopalian, is that of the present Bishop of *Lincoln*, who, in his *Elements of Christian Theology*, a work of great authority and popularity in the church of England at this time, expresses himself in the following terms. “ Though I flatter myself that I have proved episco-

\* *Christian Politics*, by *Ely Bates*, Esq. Part II. Sect. 5. Second edition, 1806.

\* It will be observed, that I am not alone in supposing that the great body of the church of *England*, both clergy and laity, reject the *divine right* of prelacy. A bishop of the highest reputation in the episcopal church in the United States, has pronounced that this is *unquestionably* so

“pacy to be an apostolical institution ; yet I readily acknowledge, “that there is no precept in the New Testament, which commands that every church should be governed by bishops. No “church can exist without *some* government. But though there “must be rules and orders for the proper discharge of the offices of “public worship ; though there must be fixed regulations concerning the appointment of ministers ; and though a subordination “among them is *expedient*, in the highest degree ; yet it does not “follow that all these things must be precisely the same in every “Christian country. They may vary with the other varying “circumstances of human society ; with the extent of a country, “the manners of its inhabitants, the nature of its civil government, “and many other peculiarities which might be specified. As it “hath not pleased our Almighty Father to prescribe any particular “form of civil government, for the security of temporal comforts “to his rational creatures ; so neither has he prescribed any “particular form of ecclesiastical polity, as absolutely necessary to “the attainment of eternal happiness. The scriptures do not “prescribe any particular form of church government.” Vol. II. p. 383, &c.

To the foregoing quotations, I shall only add, that a number of the most learned divines of the church of *England*, when writing on other subjects, have indirectly made concessions quite as decisive as any that have been mentioned. Almost every divine of that church who has undertaken to explain the prophetic parts of the sacred writings, has represented the reformed Churches as “the Lord’s sealed ones ;” as his “anointed ones ;” as the “witnesses against the man of sin ;” as the “saints of the most high ;” as having “the temple of God,” and his “altar.” Among many that might be named in confirmation of this remark, the ingenious and excellent Mr. *Faber*, in a work published in the course of the last year, (1806,) and which has received the decided approbation of his diocesan, expressly applies to the German protestants, those prophecies which represent the purest part of the Christian church. He dates the death of the witnesses at the battle of *Mulburg*, in April, 1547, and their resurrection at *Magdeburgh*, in the year 1550. He does not claim for the church of *England* even the first rank among the witnesses, and much less the exclusive title to that honour.



The foregoing quotations are only a small specimen of what might have been produced, if our limits admitted of their being further multiplied. Nothing would be more easy than to fill a volume with concessions of similar import ; concessions made, not by men of obscure name and small learning ; but by divines of the most exalted character, for talents, erudition, and piety, that ever adorned the church of *England* ; divines who shared her highest dignities, and who gave the most unquestionable evidence of attachment to her constitution. Those which we have detailed, however, are abundantly sufficient. They prove that Presbyterians are not alone in considering the *fathers* as favourable to the doctrine of ministerial parity ; that the great body of the reformers, and other witnesses for the truth, in different ages and nations, were, in the opinion of enlightened Episcopalians, friends and advocates of the same doctrine ; that the notion of the exclusive and unalterable divine right of diocesan episcopacy, has been not only rejected, but even reprobated, by some of the greatest divines of the church of *England*, in more indignant and severe language than I have permitted myself to use in the preceding pages ; and that the most competent judges have considered a large majority of the English clergy, at all periods since the reformation, as advocates of the constitution of their national church, not on the principle of *divine right*, but of *human expediency*.

## LETTER VIII.

## RISE AND PROGRESS OF PRELACY.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

WHEN we have proved that the apostolic church existed without diocesan Bishops, we have done enough. No matter how soon after the death of the apostles, and the close of the sacred canon, such an order of ministers was introduced. Whether the introduction of this order were affected in four years, or four centuries after that period, it equally rests on *human* authority alone, and is to be treated as a mere contrivance and *commandment of men*. We cannot too often repeat, nor too diligently keep in view, that the authority of Christ can be claimed for nothing which is not found, in some form, in his own word.

But our episcopal brethren, forgetting this great principle of the reformation, when we acknowledge that prelacy existed in the *fourth century*, attempt to found on this fact an argument in favour of their cause. Their argument is this: "Bishops, as an order superior to presbyters, are confessed to have existed in the fourth century. Now in what manner shall we account for the *introduction* of such an order? Can any man believe that it was an innovation foisted in by human ambition within the first three hundred years? Is it supposable that men of so much piety, self-denial, and zeal, as the ministers of the primitive church are generally represented to have been, would be disposed to usurp an unscriptural authority? Had they any temptation to do this, when, by gaining ecclesiastical pre-eminence, they only became more obnoxious to the fury of persecution? But even supposing them to have been so ambitious and unprincipled as to attempt

“ this encroachment on the rights of others, can we imagine that  
 “ such an attempt would have been successful ? Would the *rest of*  
 “ *the clergy* have quietly submitted to the usurpation ? Would the  
 “ *people* have endured it ? In a word, is it credible that so great a  
 “ change should have taken place in the constitution of the church,  
 “ without opposition, without noise, without leaving in the records  
 “ of antiquity some traces of the steps by which it was accom-  
 “ plished ? No ; it is not credible. It is impossible. The infer-  
 “ ence then is, that no such alteration ever took place ; that bish-  
 “ ops, as an order superior to presbyters, have existed in the  
 “ Christian church from the beginning, and consequently are of  
 “ apostolical origin.” This is the substance of an argument, which  
 the celebrated *Chillingworth* ventures to style “ *demonstration*,”\*  
 and on which great stress has been laid by all succeeding episcopal  
 writers.

But to invalidate this reasoning, which scarcely deserves to be  
 called specious, nothing more is necessary than a little attention to  
 a few plain facts. From these facts it will appear, that, consider-  
 ing the character and circumstances of the church, from the  
 close of the second to the beginning of the fourth century, nothing  
 was more likely to happen than such an usurpation and change  
 as are here supposed : That changes quite as inconsistent with  
 primitive purity, and quite as likely to excite opposition and noise,  
 are acknowledged on all hands, actually to have taken place during  
 that period, without our being able to find in the records of anti-  
 quity, any distinct account of the manner in which they were  
 introduced : and that, notwithstanding every plausible theory to  
 the contrary, there is abundant evidence that the precise change  
 which our opponents pronounce impossible, did, in fact, gradually  
 gain admittance into the church, after the close of the second  
 century, and produced an important revolution in its aspect and  
 government.

The desire of pre-eminence and of power is natural to man. It

\* It is not meant to be asserted that *Chillingworth* was the *first* writer  
 who stated and urged this argument. It is of *popish* origin, and, among  
 others, was employed with great confidence by *Bellarmino*, against the  
 protestants of his day in support of prelacy, and several other corrup-  
 tions of the church of *Rome*. See his work *De Notis Ecclesiæ*. Lib. 4.  
 cap. 5.

is one of the most early, powerful, and universal principles of our nature. It reigns without control in wicked men, and has more influence than it ought in the minds of the most pious. Accordingly, we find the criminal operation of this principle disclosing itself even under the eye of our Saviour himself. The sons of *Zebedee*, filled with ambition, came to their Lord with a formal request, that they might be promoted to places of distinguished rank in his kingdom. *Mark* x. 37. And even on that solemn night in which Christ was betrayed, when he had just dispensed to the twelve apostles the sacrament of the last supper, and had informed them that the hour of his departure was at hand ; when they were still seated in his presence, and might be expected to be under the influence of all the devout and humble feelings which such a scene, and such a disclosure, were calculated to inspire, *there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* *Luke* xxii. 24. The same principle continued to manifest itself after the ascension of the Saviour. The apostles repeatedly caution the ministers of their day against a spirit of covetousness and ambition, and especially against *lording it over God's heritage* ; plainly intimating, either that in the midst of all the persecution to which the church was exposed, they perceived such a criminal disposition arising ; or that they foresaw that it was likely to arise. The Apostle *Paul* more than once represents himself as called to struggle with the ambitious pretensions of Christian ministers, who sought unduly to exalt themselves : and the apostle *John* informs us, that a certain *Diotrephes*, who *loved to have the pre-eminence* in the church, violently opposed the apostolic ministry, because he considered it as unfavourable to his plans of selfishness and domination. If such a disposition were exhibited while the apostles were still alive ; while the gifts of inspiration and miracles were still enjoyed by the church ; and while the precepts and example of the Saviour were so fresh in the memory of his people, what might not have been expected to appear in three centuries afterwards, when the state of the church exhibited, in almost every respect, a lamentable degeneracy ?

We are accustomed to look back to the first ages of the church with a veneration nearly bordering on superstition. It answered the purposes of popery, to refer all their corruptions to primitive times, and to represent those times as exhibiting the models of all

excellence. But every representaton of this kind must be received with distrust. The christian church, during the apostolic age, and for half a century afterwards, did indeed present a venerable aspect. Persecuted by the world, on every side, she was favoured in an uncommon measure with the presence and spirit of her divine Head, and exhibited a degree of simplicity and purity, which has, perhaps, never since been equalled. But before the close of the *second century*, the scene began to change; and before the commencement of the *fourth*, a deplorable corruption of doctrine, discipline, and morals, had crept into the church, and disfigured the body of Christ. *Hegesippus*, an ecclesiastical historian, who wrote in the second century, declares that the *virgin purity* of the church was confined to *the days of the apostles*. Nay, *Jerome* tells us, that “the primitive churches were tainted with gross errors, while the apostles were alive, and the blood of Christ yet warm in *Judea*.” *Cyprian*, in the third century, complained of universal depravity among the clergy, as well as the laity. He declares, “We observe not the will of the Lord, having all our mind and study set upon lucre and possessions, are given to pride, full of emulation and dissension, and void of simplicity and faithful dealing.” And again, the same writer complains, that “the priests had no devotion, the deacons no fidelity; that there was no charity in works, no discipline in manners.” *Eusebius*, describing the state of the church towards the close of the third century, gives the following representation. “Bishops rushed against bishops. Most detestable hypocrisy and dissimulation advanced even to the very height of wickedness. We were not touched with any sense of the divine judgment creeping in upon us, nor used any endeavours to regain his favour; but wickedly thinking that God neither did regard nor would visit our crimes, we heaped one wickedness upon another. Those who seemed to be our *pastors*, rejecting the rule of piety, were inflamed with mutual contentions against one another; and while they were only taken up with contentions, threatenings, emulation, mutual hatred, and enmity, every one eagerly pursued his ambition in a tyrannical manner.”

After such descriptions as these, let us hear no more of the primitive church being so pure, and all her ministers so humble and disinterested, as to preclude the probability of any of them being actuated by ambition, or disposed to usurp unscriptural authority.

All authentic history shows that such a conclusion is as false in fact, as it is inconsistent with the uniform character of human nature. Yes ; that *mystery of iniquity* which began to work under the ministry of our Saviour himself, and which retarded the growth of the church, while it was watered with the tears and the blood of the apostles, might be expected to prove, as it did, in a much greater degree, her bane, in after times. But, perhaps it will be said, that, although some of the clergy in the second and third centuries, were ambitious, and disposed to usurp unscriptural power ; yet we cannot suppose that their claims would have been calmly yielded, and their usurpations submitted to without a struggle, by the other clergy, and by the body of the people. If, then, such claims were made, and such usurpations effected, why do we not find in the early history of the church, some account of changes so memorable, and of conflicts so dreadful, as must have attended their introduction ?

In answer to this question, let it be remembered, that the nations over which the Christian religion was spread with so much rapidity during the first three centuries, were sunk in deplorable ignorance. Grossly illiterate, very few were able to read ; and even to these few, manuscripts were of difficult access. At that period, popular eloquence was the great engine of persuasion ; and where the character of the mind is not fixed by reading, and a consequent habit of attention and accurate thinking, it is impossible to say how deeply and suddenly it may be operated upon by such an engine. A people of this description, wholly unaccustomed to speculations on government ; universally subjected to despotic rule in the state ; having no just ideas of religious liberty ; altogether unfurnished with the means of communicating and uniting with each other, which the art of printing has since afforded ; torn with dissensions among themselves, and liable to be *turned about with every wind of doctrine*, such a people could offer little resistance to those who were ambitious of ecclesiastical power. A fairer opportunity for the few to take the advantage of the ignorance, the credulity, the divisions, and the weakness of the many, can scarcely be imagined. In truth, under these circumstances, ecclesiastical usurpation is so far from being improbable ; that, to suppose it not to have taken place, would be to suppose a continued miracle.

Nor is there more difficulty in supposing that these encroach-



ments were submitted to by the *clergy*, than by the *people*. Some yielded through fear of the bold and domineering spirits who contended for seats of honour ; some with the hope of obtaining preferment themselves in their turn ; and some from that lethargy and sloth which ever prevent a large portion of mankind from engaging in any thing which requires enterprise and exertion. To these circumstances it may be added, that, while some of the *presbyters*, under the name of *bishops*, assumed unscriptural authority over the rest of that order ; the increasing power of the latter over the *deacons*, and other subordinate grades of church officers, offered something like a recompense for their submission to those who claimed a power over themselves.

In addition to all these circumstances, it is to be recollected, that the encroachments and the change in question took place *gradually*. When great strides in the assumption of power are *suddenly* made, they seldom fail to rouse resentment, and excite opposition. But when made artfully, and by slow degrees, nothing is more common than to see them pass without opposition, and almost without notice. Instances of this kind among nations sunk in ignorance, and long accustomed to despotic government, are numberless ; and they are by no means rare even among the more enlightened. The British nation, in the seventeenth century, saw a monarch restored with enthusiasm, and almost without opposition, to the throne, by those very persons, who, a few years before, had declared the bitterest hatred to royalty. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, one of the most enlightened nations of *Europe*, in a little more than twelve years after dethroning and decapitating a mild and gentle king, and, after denouncing kingly government with almost every possible expression of abhorrence, yielded, without a struggle, to the will of a despotic usurper. And, still more recently, we have seen a people, enlightened and free, who had for more than two centuries maintained and boasted of their republican character, submit ignobly and at once, to the yoke of a monarch imposed on them by a powerful neighbour. In short, the most limited knowledge of human nature, and of history, shows not only the *possibility*, but the *actual* and *frequent occurrence* of changes from free government to tyranny and despotism, in a much shorter period than a century ; and all this in periods when information was more equally diffused, and the principles of social

order much better understood, than in the second and third centuries of the Christian æra.

But we may go a step further. It is not only manifest, that the state of the church and of the world, at the period in question, was such as to render the progress of doctrinal corruption, and of clerical domination *probable*, but it is on all hands acknowledged, that such corruption and domination, did, *in fact*, take place. In support of this assertion, many instances might be produced ; but I shall content myself with a few of the most remarkable.

The administering the *Lord's supper* to *infants*, was a corruption which early arose in the church. It is certain that this corruption existed in the *second* century. *Cyprian*, in the *third* century, speaks of it not as a new thing, but as an ordinary practice. *Augustin*, some time afterwards, calls it an *apostolical tradition*, represents it as a *general* custom, and expressly founds the propriety and necessity of it on *John* vi. 53. And this practice prevailed so *long*, that *Bishop Bossuet*, in a treatise on the communion, traces it down to the twelfth century. Now that this practice had no foundation, either in scripture or apostolic example, is conceded by almost the whole Christian world. How, then, shall we account for its introduction and general adoption in the church ? Can any one tell *when* it was introduced ? By *whom* ? Whether it met with any *opposition* ? Whether among the faithful of that day, any church refused to adopt it ? And why we are not able to find in all antiquity, an account of any disputes and struggles which took place on this subject ? I will venture to say that no man can give any authentic and satisfactory information on any of these points. Of course, on the principal assumed by our episcopal brethren, we are compelled to conclude, that this practice was not an innovation, but derived from the apostles. This case is even stronger than that which it is brought to illustrate ; for as, on the one hand, there was *less temptation*, on the ordinary principles of human nature, to adopt this unscriptural abuse of the eucharist, than to contrive and extend ecclesiastical domination ; so, on the other, it was more likely to strike the mind at once with disgust, and to make an unfavourable impression on the mass of the people.

Another instance of acknowledged, and most remarkable usurp-

ation, within the period which we are considering, is the pre-eminence which *archbishops* and *metropolitans* claimed over the *ordinary bishops*. All protestant episcopalians allow that bishops are, by divine right, *equal*; and, of course, that *archbishops*, *metropolitans*, and *patriarchs*, are grades of mere *human invention*. But it is certain that an inequality of rank among bishops began to take place in the church so *early*, became in a little while so *general*, and was introduced with so little *opposition* and noise, that some have undertaken, on this very ground, to prove that it was of apostolical origin. Yet our opponents in this controversy, with one voice allow, that no warrant is to be found for it either in Scripture or in primitive practice. How then (to adopt their own argument) was this inequality introduced? Can we suppose that any of the pious bishops began to be so early infected with ambition as to usurp unscriptural authority? Or can we suppose that the other bishops would quietly submit to such usurpation? No; on the principles of episcopal reasoning, we must conclude that no such usurpation was possible; and that *archbishops*, and *metropolitans* existed from the beginning. But how does the mist of false theory vanish before the light of truth and fact!

Closely connected with the introduction of *archbishops*, and other grades, in the episcopal office, is the rise and progress of the *papacy*. It is certain that the antichristian claims of the bishop of *Rome* were begun before the close of the second century. The writings of *Irenæus* and *Tertullian*, both furnish abundant evidence of this fact. Yet the records of antiquity give so little information respecting the various steps by which this "man of sin" rose to the possession of his power; they contain so little evidence of any efficient opposition to his claims; and represent the submission of the other bishops as being so early and general, that the papists attempt, from these circumstances, to prove the divine origin of their system. Yet what protestant is there who does not reject this reasoning as totally fallacious, and conclude that the supremacy of the bishop of *Rome* is an unscriptural usurpation? And although the most impartial and learned divines may and do differ among themselves in fixing the several dates of the rise, progress, and establishment of this great spiritual usurper; yet the *fact*, that he did thus rise, and advance, and erect a tyrannical throne in the church, contrary to all that might have been expected both from

the piety and the selfishness of the early christians, is doubted by none.

Scarcely less remarkable, or in itself improbable, was the change which early took place in the mode of *electing* and *installing* the pastors of the church. You have been informed in preceding parts of this work, that, as each bishop, in the primitive church, was the pastor of a single congregation; so every bishop was elected by *the people* of his charge, and ordained to the work of the ministry *in their presence*. It is certain, however, that at least as early as the fourth century, this power of electing their own bishops began to be gradually taken away from the people; and that in the course of two or three centuries afterwards, the privilege was almost wholly withdrawn from them. But how came a right so popular, and so highly prized, to be tamely surrendered? And why is it that the records of antiquity furnish so little information on this subject; insomuch that we scarcely know any thing more than the two great facts, that this right of popular election was once enjoyed, and that it was soon afterwards taken away? It is of little importance how these questions may be answered by different theorists. It is enough for us to know that the facts are established; and that the same principles of reasoning apply to this case, as to the main point in dispute with our episcopal brethren.

The abolition of the office of *ruling elder*, through the greater part of the Christian world, is another signal instance of early departure from the model of the primitive church. The New Testament speaks of this class of officers as existing in the apostolic age. Several early writers of reputation, as we have seen, allude to them; and *Hilary*, who wrote in the fourth century, expressly declares, that they once existed in the church, but were gradually discontinued. And, though he professes not to be able fully to explain the reason of their falling into disuse, yet he refers it to the *pride* and *ambition* of the *clergy*, who were unwilling to have officers of this class sitting with them, and judging in the affairs of the church. Here a difficulty occurs quite as great, and of the same kind as that which our episcopal brethren urge in the case before us. How shall we account for these *elders* consenting to be deprived of their office, and banished from the church? How shall we account for the *people* yielding to this encroachment on their rights; could a change so important and extensive have taken place without a

struggle? Why is it, then, that we find no account of this struggle in the records of antiquity? We may not be able to return decisive and satisfactory answers to these questions: but the great fact, that the change to which they refer, *did* take place; and that it was effected gradually, and without any violent struggle, at least so far as history has informed us, are truths abundantly established.

This enumeration of early departures from primitive purity, might be greatly extended, were it either necessary, or consistent with our limits. I might show, that before the close of the *second* century, *sub-deacons*, *acolythes*, *exorcists*, and other officers of inferior grade, who had no place in the apostolic church, were introduced by human pride and folly, and employed as means of elevating the clergy, and of placing them at a greater distance from the people. *When* these unauthorized offices were first instituted, we are no where informed. By *whom* or by *what means* they were introduced, we are equally ignorant. But the fact, that they did creep into the church without any other than human authority, is undeniable.

All these deviations from primitive usage took place at an *early period*. They were of a nature calculated to interest the feelings both of the clergy and of the people, and to excite long and violent *opposition* from various quarters. Yet the records of antiquity give us no satisfactory information concerning any such opposition, or the steps by which these innovations were introduced. Now what good reason can be assigned, why that *particular kind* of clerical usurpation which Presbyterians assert to have taken place, should appear more improbable and incredible, than the instances of similar usurpation which are universally acknowledged? Does not every man of common sense see that the former was quite as likely to happen as the latter? Nay, is it not evident that some of the latter are much more difficult to be accounted for than the former? Yes; precisely the same reasoning that will enable us to account for the introduction of *archbishops*, for the abolition of the office of *ruling elders*, and for the discontinuance of the *popular election* of bishops, will also enable us with even more ease, to explain the fact, that some of the pastors of the churches, within an hundred years after the apostolic age, should succeed in gradually encroaching on the rights of their equals, and



in appropriating to themselves titles and honours which originally belonged to every pastor.

Nor is it wonderful that we find so little said concerning these usurpations in the early records of antiquity. There was probably but little written on the subject ; since those who were most ambitious to shine as writers, were most likely to be forward in making unscriptural claims themselves ; and, of course, would be little disposed to record their own shame. It is likewise probable, that the little that was written on such a subject, would be lost ; because the art of *printing* being unknown, and the trouble and expense of multiplying copies being only incurred for the sake of possessing *interesting* and *popular* works, it was not to be expected, that writings so hostile to the ambition and vices of the clergy, would be much read, if it were possible to suppress them. And when to these circumstances we add, that literature, after the fourth century, was chiefly in the hands of ecclesiastics ; that many important works written within the first three centuries are known to be lost ; and that of the few which remain, some are acknowledged on all hands, to have been grossly corrupted, and radically mutilated, we cannot wonder that so little in explanation of the various steps of clerical usurpation has reached our times.

I have now shown, that a change in the character and powers of some of the primitive bishops was *possible*, and even *probable*. I have shown that changes quite as likely to be vigorously resisted, and to occupy a large space in the early history of the church, were in fact early introduced, without any proof of such resistance being found in the scanty and mutilated records of antiquity. We are under no obligation to go further. What has been said is abundantly sufficient to refute the episcopal argument. If prelatical bishops are no where to be found in scripture, but are found in the records of the fourth century ; then to show that their introduction, within the first three hundred years was *practicable*, is all that a reasonable Episcopalian can demand. But this, though sufficient to silence our opponents, may not satisfy an inquisitive antiquarian. It remains, then, to take one step further, and to show, that the change which has been proved to be *practicable*, and even *probable*, did *actually take place* ; that it is not a mere *hypothesis*, adopted without evidence, but a *matter of fact*, which the historian ought not to overlook, even if it were wholly uncon-



nected with modern controversies. The proof of this fact shall be drawn from the following sources :

*First ;* From a comparison of the *general language* of scripture, and the writers of the first two centuries, concerning bishops, with the *general language* used on the same subject in the fourth century. We have before shown, that in the New Testament, the titles *bishop* and *presbyter* are indiscriminately applied to the same persons ; and that no style of expression is employed by the Spirit of God, which gives the least intimation that *bishops* were an order distinct from, and superior to, *presbyters* in the apostolic age. We have shown, that the same indiscriminate application of scriptural titles, and the same language expressive of ministerial parity, are found, with scarcely any exception, in all the authentic writings of the first two hundred years. It is not necessary here to repeat the proof of these positions. They will therefore be assumed as established points. But in the writings of the third century, we begin to perceive a style of expression indicating the commencement of a distinction between *bishops* and *presbyters* ; and in the fourth and fifth centuries, we find this distinction strongly and generally marked. In short, that, in the course of the first three hundred years after Christ, there was gradually introduced a remarkable change of language, in speaking of the titles and powers of Christian ministers, is admitted, not only by a great majority of ecclesiastical historians, and of other learned men, but also by many of the best informed, and most impartial Episcopalians themselves. Now whence did this change in the current language of that period arise ? Not from accident, nor from the caprice of a few individuals. Neither of these would be sufficient to account for a change so important and extensive. It arose evidently from a change in the *nature of the offices* expressed by this language. It arose from the fact, that in the apostolic age, and for more than a hundred years afterwards, prelatical bishops had no existence ; and that in the fourth century, this class of officers, as a distinct order, had been introduced, and of course, required new distinctions, or a new use of terms and titles to designate their character.

*Secondly ;* That *bishops*, as an order of clergy superior to *presbyters*, were introduced *after* the apostolic age, and without any divine warrant, may also be established by the declarations of several approved writers, who lived near the time when this change

occurred, and who expressly assert that it took place. The quotations from *Jerome*, *Hilary*, *Chrysostom*, &c. detailed in the *fifth* letter, are equally clear and decisive on this subject. The declarations of *Jerome*, in particular, are so pointed and unquestionable, so formally stated, and repeated in such a variety of forms, that they must silence even prejudice and sophistry themselves. Were not these learned men as likely to *understand* the subject on which they wrote as any of the present day? It is credible that they should be *totally deceived* concerning a fact, which, if it did not fall under their own observation, must have been personally witnessed by their immediate predecessors? It is not credible. Yet unless we suppose these writers to have been either deceived or dishonest, the Presbyterian or apostolic form of church government, was gradually set aside and gave place to prelacy, within three hundred and fifty years after Christ.

*Thirdly*; On the supposition that diocesan episcopacy was a mere human invention, introduced long after the apostolic age, we might expect to find this form of ecclesiastical government first embraced in populous and wealthy cities, and making its way more slowly in the remote and obscure parts of the church. And accordingly we find this to have been precisely the fact. Prelacy was first introduced and organized in *Rome*, *Antioch*, *Alexandria*, *Carthage*, &c. From these, as from so many centres, it spread into the neighbouring countries, and finally became general. But in the parts of the church which were placed at the greatest distance from these seats of corruption, the reception of prelacy was considerably later. *Hilary* and others declare, that many of the *African* presbyters continued to exercise the *ordaining* power until the middle of the *fourth* century. The churches in *Scotland* remained *Presbyterian* in their government, from the introduction of Christianity into that country, in the *second* century, until the *fifth* century, when *Palladius* succeeded in introducing diocesan bishops.\* It also appears, from the most authentic history, that the *country* churches generally maintained the primitive plan of government much longer than those of the cities, and were from one or two centuries later in receiving episcopacy as a superior order.

\* This fact is ascertained by the writings of *Major*, *Fordon*, *Boethius*, &c. &c.

The ministers of these country congregations, were called *Chorepiscopi*, or *country bishops*. They continued to exercise full episcopal powers a considerable time after the presbyters within and near the great cities had become subject to diocesans; until at length the influence of the bishop of *Rome*, and of some other ambitious prelates, procured a decree of the council of *Sardis* to suppress the *chorepiscopi* entirely.\* The churches of the valleys in *Savoy* and *Piedmont*, were still more successful in supporting primitive episcopacy. Although they retained the term *bishop* in its original meaning, yet they rejected the government of prelatical bishops, as well as the authority of the pope, and continued to set an example of ministerial parity for many centuries. All these circumstances prove that diocesan episcopacy was an innovation. If it had been the apostolical model, and especially if it had been deemed so important and fundamental as our opponents represent it to be, then those churches which were most remote from worldly influence, and discovered the greatest love for primitive simplicity, would have been ever found adhering to the system of prelacy with peculiar zeal. Instead of this, the more we examine the records of antiquity, the more we shall find precisely the reverse to be the fact. A circumstance which plainly evinces that ministerial parity was both the doctrine and practice of the apostolic age; and that episcopacy, in the modern sense of the word, is the invention of man, and was introduced long afterwards.

*Fourthly*; The decrees of some of the *early councils* concerning *bishops*, clearly evince that such a change as we have supposed, really took place. It is impossible to look into the decrees of the numerous councils which were convened within the the first five or six centuries, without perceiving constant provision made, on the one hand, for gradually extending the power of the bishops; and, on the other, for restraining the encroachments of those whose ambition had become inordinate and offensive. We find one council decreeing, that bishops should no longer be ordained for *country places* or *small towns*; and that when the then incumbent bishops of small and obscure places should happen to die, no suc-

\* The reason given by the council for this decree is remarkable: *Ne vilescat nomen Episcopi*; i. e. lest the title of bishop should become too cheap.

cessors should be appointed. We find another enacting a canon, that *country bishops* should no longer be allowed to ordain; and that *city presbyters* should not be thereafter permitted to ordain, *out of their own parishes*, without having the permission of the *city bishops*. And the reasons given for these and other restrictions, are, not the command of Christ; not apostolical example; but that *the honour of the church might be preserved, and that the episcopal dignity might be maintained*. The very existence of these decrees, proves that *presbyters* had been before allowed to ordain; and that *bishops* were gradually undergoing a change from the *parochial* to the *diocesan* character. In contrast with these and similar canons, it would be easy to produce others, for restraining the indecent attempts of some bishops to enlarge their dioceses, and to encroach on the limits of their neighbours.\* If we had never heard of the fact before, these canons would suggest the suspicion, that bishops were now, by little and little, extending their pastoral care from single congregations to extensive districts.

*Fifthly*; The gradual *diminution* of the *number of bishops*, after the first three centuries, serves to confirm the fact for which I am contending. The *great number* of bishops found in the early ages of the church, was remarked in a former letter. They appear to have been as numerous within two or three centuries of the apostolic age, as modern *parish ministers*. But as we recede from that period, we find their *number* gradually diminishing, in exact proportion as their claims and honours became extended. In the island of *Crete*, where we are informed that in early times there were *one hundred* bishops, in a few centuries afterwards we find but *twelve*. In a small district in *Asia*, where, in the third century, there were settled *one hundred and five bishops*, in two or three centuries their number was reduced to *nine*. Numerous instances of the same kind might be produced, were it necessary or proper. And this diminution of the number of bishops is the more remarkable, because, at the same time, the number of converts to Christianity, the extent of the church, and of course the call for ministerial labours, were daily increasing. What is the obvious inference from

\* For a more full account than it is possible to give in this manual, of these canons, and other proceedings of early councils, concerning the powers of bishops, *Baxter's Treatise of Episcopacy*, London, 4to. 1681. and the learned *Clarkson's Primitive Episcopacy*, 8vo. 1688.

these facts? It is that primitive bishops were a very different class of officers from those which bore that name three or four centuries afterwards; and consequently that, during this period, an important change had taken place in the character and powers of bishops.

*Finally*; It is no small argument in favour of the truth of my position, that it is confirmed by the most learned and impartial historians, and other competent judges, of modern times.

The first writer whom I shall quote in proof of the fact which I am endeavouring to establish, is the learned Dr. *Mosheim*, a Lutheran divine, whose *Ecclesiastical History* has been, for half a century, the theme of praise, for the general impartiality as well as erudition manifested by its author. In his account of the *first* century, he has the following remarks. "The rulers of the church at this time, were called either *presbyters* or *bishops*, which two titles are, in the New Testament, undoubtedly applied to the same order of men. These were persons of eminent gravity, and such as had distinguished themselves by their superior sanctity and merit. Their particular functions were not always the same; for while some of them confined their labours to the instruction of the people, others contributed in different ways to the edification of the church: such was the constitution of the Christian church in its infancy, when its assemblies were neither numerous nor splendid. Three or four *presbyters*, men of remarkable piety and wisdom, ruled these small congregations in perfect harmony, nor did they stand in need of any president or superior to maintain concord and order, where no dissensions were known. But the number of the *presbyters* and *deacons* increasing with that of the churches, and the sacred work of the ministry growing more painful and weighty by a number of additional duties, these new circumstances required new regulations. It was then judged necessary that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside in the council of *presbyters*, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and to be a centre of union to the whole society. This person was at first styled the *Angel* of the church to which he belonged: but was afterwards distinguished by the name of *bishop* or *inspector*; a name borrowed from the Greek language, and expressing the principal part of the episcopal function, which was to inspect into, and superintend the affairs of the church. Let none, however, con-



“ found the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the church  
 “ with those of whom we read in the following ages. For though  
 “ they were both distinguished by the same name, yet they differ-  
 “ ed extremely, and that in many respects. A bishop during the  
 “ first and second century, was a person who had the care of one  
 “ Christian assembly, which, at that time, was, generally speaking,  
 “ small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assem-  
 “ bly he acted, not so much with the authority of a *master*, as with  
 “ the zeal and diligence of a faithful *servant*. He instructed the  
 “ people, performed the several parts of divine worship, attended  
 “ the sick, and inspected into the circumstances and supplies of the  
 “ poor.” *Eccles. Hist.* I. 101. 104—106 Such is the representa-  
 tion which this learned historian gives of the government of the  
 Christian church during the *first*, and the greater part of the *second*  
 century.

Of the *third* century he speaks in the following manner. “ The  
 “ face of things began now to change in the Christian church. The  
 “ ancient method of ecclesiastical government, *seemed*, in general,  
 “ still to subsist, while, at the same time, *by imperceptible steps*, it  
 “ varied from the primitive rule, and degenerated towards the form  
 “ of a religious monarchy. For the bishops aspired to higher  
 “ degrees of power and authority than they had formerly possessed,  
 “ and not only violated the *rights* of the *people*, but also made gra-  
 “ dual encroachments upon the privileges of the *presbyters*. And  
 “ that they might cover these usurpations with an air of justice, and  
 “ an appearance of reason, they published *new doctrines* concern-  
 “ ing the *nature of the Church*, and of the *Episcopal dignity*.  
 “ One of the principal authors of this *change* in the government of  
 “ the church was *Cyprian*, who pleaded for the power of the bi-  
 “ shops with more zeal and vehemence than had ever been hitherto  
 “ employed in that cause. This change in the form of ecclesias-  
 “ tical government was soon followed by a train of vices, which  
 “ dishonoured the character and authority of those to whom the  
 “ administration of the church was committed. For though seve-  
 “ ral yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of  
 “ primitive piety and christian virtue ; yet many were sunk in lux-  
 “ ury and voluptuousness ; puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and  
 “ ambition ; possessed with a spirit of contention and discord ; and  
 “ addicted to many other vices, that cast an undeserved reproach



“ upon the holy religion, of which they were the unworthy profess-  
“ ors and ministers. This is testified in such an ample manner,  
“ by the repeated complaints of many of the most respectable wri-  
“ ters of this age, that truth will not permit us to spread the veil  
“ which we should otherwise be desirous to cast over such enormi-  
“ ties among an order so sacred. The bishops assumed, in many  
“ places, a princely authority. They appropriated to their evan-  
“ gelical function, the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. A  
“ throne, surrounded with ministers, exalted above his *equals*, the  
“ servant of the meek and humble Jesus; and sumptuous garments  
“ dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant  
“ veneration for their arrogated authority. The example of the  
“ *bishops* was ambitiously imitated by the *presbyters*, who, neglect-  
“ ing the sacred duties of their station, abandoned themselves to the  
“ indolence and delicacy of an effeminate and luxurious life. The  
“ deacons, beholding the *presbyters* deserting thus their functions,  
“ boldly usurped their rights and privileges; and the effects of a  
“ corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred  
“ order.” I. 265—267.

I shall only add a short extract from the same writer's account of the *fourth* century. “ The bishops, whose opulence and autho-  
“ rity were considerably increased since the reign of *Constantine*,  
“ began to introduce gradually innovations into the form of eccle-  
“ siastical discipline, and to change the ancient government of the  
“ church. Their first step was an entire exclusion of the *people*  
“ from all part in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs; and  
“ afterwards, they, by decrees, divested even the *presbyters* of  
“ their ancient privileges, and their primitive authority, that they  
“ might have no importunate protesters to control their ambition,  
“ or oppose their proceedings; and principally that they might  
“ either engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper,  
“ the possessions and revenues of the church. Hence it came to  
“ pass that at the conclusion of the *fourth* century, there remained  
“ no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the  
“ church. Many of the privileges which had formerly belonged  
“ to the *presbyters* and people, were usurped by the bishops; and  
“ many of the rights which had been formally vested in the uni-  
“ versal church, were transferred to the emperors, and to sub-  
“ ordinate officers and magistrates.” I. 348.

Such is the representation of *Mosheim*, one of the most learned men of the eighteenth century ; and who had probably investigated the early history of the church with as much diligence and penetration as any man that ever lived.

The next citation shall be taken from *Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The hostility of this writer to the Christian religion is well known. Of course, on any subject involving the divine origin of Christianity, I should feel little disposition either to respect his judgment, or to rely on his assertions. But on the subject before us, which is a question of *fact*, and which he treats historically, he had no temptation to deviate from impartiality ; or, if such temptation had existed, it would have been likely to draw him to the side of ecclesiastical aristocracy and splendour, rather than to that of primitive simplicity. His deep and extensive learning, no competent judge ever questioned : and, indeed, his representations on this subject, are fortified by so many references to the most approved writers, that they cannot be considered as resting on his candour or veracity alone.\*

Mr. *Gibbon* thus describes the character and duties of Christian bishops in the first and second centuries : " The public functions  
" of religion were solely entrusted to the established ministers of  
" the church, the *bishops* and the *presbyters* ; two appellations  
" which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the *same*  
" office, and the *same order* of persons. The name of *presbyter*  
" was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom.  
" The title of *bishop* denoted their inspection over the faith and  
" manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral  
" care. In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a  
" larger or smaller number of these *episcopal presbyters* guided  
" each infant congregation, with equal authority, and with united  
" counsels. But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the

\* The pious episcopal divine, Dr. *Haweis*, speaking of Mr. *Gibbon's* mode of representing this subject, expresses himself in the following manner. " Where no immediate bias to distort the truth, leaves him an  
" impartial witness, I will quote *Gibbon* with pleasure. I am conscious  
" his authority is more likely to weigh with the world in general, than  
" mine. I will therefore, simply report his account of the government  
" and nature of the primitive church. I think we shall not in this point  
" greatly differ." *Eccles. Hist.* I. 416.

“ directing hand of a superior magistrate ; and the order of public  
 “ deliberations soon introduces the office of a president, invested  
 “ at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of  
 “ executing the resolutions of the assembly. A regard for  
 “ the public tranquillity, which would so frequently have been  
 “ interrupted by annual, or by occasional elections, induced the  
 “ primitive Christians to constitute an honourable and perpetual  
 “ magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among  
 “ their presbyters, to execute, during his life, the duties of their  
 “ ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that  
 “ the lofty title of *bishop* began to *raise itself* above the humble  
 “ appellation of *presbyter* ; and while the latter remained the most  
 “ natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate,  
 “ the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president.  
 “ The pious and humble presbyters who were first dignified with  
 “ the episcopal title, could not possess, and would probably have  
 “ rejected the power and pomp which now encircle the tiara of the  
 “ Roman Pontiff, or the mitre of a German prelate. The primitive  
 “ bishops were considered only as the *first* of their *equals*, and the  
 “ honourable servants of a free people. Whenever the episcopal  
 “ chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen  
 “ among the presbyters, by the suffrage of the whole congregation.  
 “ Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians  
 “ were governed more than a hundred years after the death of the  
 “ apostles.”\* *Decline and Fall*, Vol. II. 272—275.

Concerning the state of episcopacy in the *third* century, Mr. *Gibbon* thus speaks. “ As the legislative authority of the particular churches, was insensibly superseded by the use of *councils*, the *bishops* obtained by their alliance, a much larger share of executive and arbitrary power ; and, as soon as they were connected by a sense of their common interest, they were enabled to attack with united vigour the original rights of the clergy and people. The prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of *exhortation* into that of *command*,

\* Here is an explicit declaration, that the *presidency* or standing *moderatorship* of one of the presbyters, among his colleagues, without any claim to *superiority of order*, was the only kind of episcopacy that existed in the church until near the close of the *second* century.

“scattered the seeds of future usurpations, and supplied by scripture allegories, and declamatory rhetoric, their deficiency of force and of reason. They exalted the unity and power of the church, as it was represented in the *episcopal office*, of which every bishop enjoyed an equal and undivided portion. Princes and magistrates, it was often repeated, might boast an earthly claim to a transitory dominion. It was the episcopal authority alone, which was derived from the Deity, and extended itself over this, and over another world. The bishops were the vicegerents of Christ, the successors of the apostles, and the mystic substitutes of the high priest of the Mosaic law. Their exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character, *invaded the freedom* both of clerical and of popular elections; and if, in the administration of the church, they sometimes consulted the judgment of the presbyters, or the inclination of the people, they most carefully inculcated the merit of such a voluntary condescension.”  
—I. p. 276, 277.

Dr. *Haweis*, an episcopal divine, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, a late and popular work before quoted, substantially agrees with Dr. *Mosheim*, and Mr. *Gibbon*, in their representations on this subject. He explicitly pronounces with them, that primitive episcopacy was *parochial*, and not *diocesan*; that clerical pride and ambition gradually introduced prelacy; that there was no material innovation, however, on the primitive model, until the middle of the second century; and that after this, the system of imparity made rapid progress, until there arose, in succession, *diocesan bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, patriarchs*, and, finally, the *pope* himself.

The great body of ecclesiastical historians give, in substance, the same account. There is, indeed, some difference of opinion among them concerning the *times* at which the various steps in the rise and progress of prelacy were taken, and concerning the *means* which ambitious ecclesiastics employed in making their successive encroachments; but I know of no protestant historian who has the character of even tolerable impartiality, who does not represent prelacy as a human invention, which was brought in some time after the apostles' days, and which arose gradually and almost insensibly from small beginnings, until it terminated in the grand and triumphant usurpation of the bishop of Rome. Hence profes-

sor *Whitaker*, an episcopal divine of great learning, and of high authority, speaking of the conceded fact, that prelacy was introduced after the apostolic age, and as a remedy against schism, frankly declares, that "the remedy was almost worse than the disease ; for as at first one *presbyter* was set over the rest, and " made *bishop*, so afterwards one *bishop* was set over the other " *bishops*. Thus that custom begot the *pope* and his monarchy, " and brought them by little and little into the church." *Regim. Eccles.* p. 540.

The *fact* being thus established, that diocesan episcopacy was not sanctioned by the apostles ; that it was the offspring of human ambition ; and that it was *gradually* introduced into the church ; I shall not detain you long in considering the precise *gradations* by which it was introduced, or the precise *date* to be assigned to each step in its progress. Such an inquiry is as *unnecessary* and *unimportant* as it is *difficult*. But as it may gratify some readers to know how those who have most deeply and successfully explored antiquity, have considered the subject, I shall attempt a sketch of what appears to have been the rise and progress of this remarkable usurpation.

The christian religion spread itself during the apostolic age, over a large part of the Roman empire. It was first received in the principal cities, *Jerusalem*, *Antioch*, *Ephesus*, *Corinth*, and *Rome*. Here congregations appear to have been first formed, and church officers first appointed. As the places of worship were usually private houses, it follows of course that each congregation was comparatively small. And as we read of *great multitudes* having believed in several of the larger cities, we may infer that there were *a number* of these congregations, or small *house churches* in each of those cities.

Each primitive congregation was furnished with one or more *elders*, and also with *deacons*. The *elders* were of two kinds : the first class were ministers of the Gospel, and therefore *taught* and lead the devotions of the people, as well as *ruled* in the church. The other class assisted as *rulers* only. It is not certain that *both* these classes of elders were found in *every* church. We only know that they both existed in the apostolic age ; and that all the elders of each congregation, when convened, formed a kind of



parochial *presbytery*, or *church session*. The *elders*<sup>1</sup> were also called *bishops*. Of these each congregation was always furnished with *one*, and sometimes with *several*, according to the number of its members, and other circumstances. We are expressly told in the sacred history, that in the days of the apostles there were a *number* of *bishops* in each of the cities of *Ephesus* and *Philippi*; and it is most probable that these were the associated pastors of congregations in those cities respectively.

In those cases in which there were several *pastors* or *bishops* in the same church, they were at first perfectly, and in all respects equal. "They ruled the church," as *Jerome* expresses it, "in common;" and the alternate titles of *bishop* and *elder* belonged and were equally applied to all. It does not appear, that in the beginning, even a temporary *chairman* was found necessary. There was probably little formality in their mode of transacting business. A large portion of the spirit of their master supplied the place of specific rules, and of energetic government. But towards the close of the first century, when both churches and ministers had greatly multiplied; when it was common to have a number of *teaching* as well as *ruling* elders in the same congregation; when, with the increasing number, it is most probable that some unworthy characters had crept into the ministry; and when, of course, the preservation of order in their parochial *presbyteries* was more difficult, the expedient of appointing a *president* or *moderator*, would naturally and almost unavoidably be adopted. This presiding presbyter was generally, at first, the oldest and gravest of the number; but soon afterwards, as we are told, the rule of *seniority* was laid aside, and the most able, enterprising, and decisive *presbyter*, was chosen to fill the chair. After a while, the choice of a *president* was not made at every meeting of the *parochial presbytery* or *church session*, but was made for an indefinite time, and often *for life*; in which case the choice usually fell upon the person who had the most influence, and was supposed to possess the greatest weight of character. This chairman or *moderator*, who presided during the debates, collected the voices, and pronounced the sentences of the bench of presbyters, was, of course, the most conspicuous and dignified of the number. He had no pre-eminence of *order* over his brethren; but (to employ the illustration of a respectable episcopal divine, before quoted,) as



the chairman of a committee has a more honourable place than the rest of the members, while the committee is sitting; so a chairman for life, in a dignified ecclesiastical court, was generally regarded with peculiar respect and veneration. In conducting public worship, this chairman always took the lead; as the organ of the body, he called the other presbyters to the performance of the several parts assigned to them; and usually himself prayed and preached. When the bench of presbyters was called to perform an *ordination*, the chairman, of course, presided in this transaction; and, in general, in all acts of the church session or consistory, he took the lead, and was the principal medium of communication.

This practice of choosing a president in the consistorial courts appears to have begun in a short time after the death of the apostles, and to have been the only kind of pre-eminence that was enjoyed by any of the bishops, over their brethren, until about the middle, and, in some churches, till the close of the *second* century. Indeed, *Jerome* declares, that this was the only kind of episcopal pre-eminence that existed in the church of *Alexandria*, one of the most conspicuous then in the world, until the middle of the *third* century. That such was the *only* superiority which the principal pastor of each church enjoyed in primitive times, and that such was the *origin* of this superiority, is evident, not only from the direct testimony of antiquity, but also, indirectly, from the *names* by which this officer is generally distinguished by the early writers. He is not only called emphatically, *the bishop* of the church; but, as all his colleagues also had the title of *bishop*, he is, perhaps, more frequently styled, by way of distinction, the *president*, (Προσέτωρ); the *chairman*, (Προεδρος); and the person who filled the *first seat*, (Πρωτοκαθεδρία), in the presbytery. Had we no other evidence in the case, these titles alone would go far towards establishing the origin and nature of his pre-eminence.

The powers of this chairman were gradually increased. In some cases his own ambition, and, in others, the exigencies of particular times and places, at once multiplied his duties, enlarged his authority, and augmented his honours. Not only the *ruling elders*, but also his colleagues in the ministry were led insensibly to look upon him with peculiar reverence. His presence began to be deemed *necessary*, at first to the *regularity*, and afterwards to the

*validity* of all the proceedings of the bench of presbyters. And as his office, in those times, was a post of *danger* as well as of *honour*, the rest of the presbyters would more readily submit to the claims of a man who put his life in his hand to serve the church. This may be called the FIRST STEP in the rise of prelacy. The example once set in some of the principal cities, was probably soon adopted in the less populous towns, and in the country churches.

This measure led to another equally natural. The pastors or bishops who resided in the same city, were led on different occasions to meet together, to consult and to transact various kinds of business. Their meetings were probably at first, attended with very little formality. In a short time, however, as Christianity gained ground, they came together more frequently; had more business to transact; and found it expedient to be more formal in their proceedings. A *president* or *chairman* became necessary, as in the smaller presbytery, or church session. Such an officer was accordingly chosen, sometimes at each meeting, but more frequently for an indefinite period, or for life. Whatever number of congregations and of ministers were thus united under a Presbytery, they were styled, (upon a principle of ecclesiastical unity which was then common,) one church. The standing *moderator* or *president* of this larger Presbytery, was styled *the bishop* of the city in which he presided. This was a SECOND STEP towards prelacy. At what precise time it was taken, is difficult to be ascertained. But before the close of the third century, so greatly increased were the affluence and pride of ecclesiastics, that the *president* or *moderator* of these meetings was seated on a lofty *throne* in the midst of the assembly, decorated with splendid *robes*, and loaded with peculiar honours. As he officially superintended the execution of the decrees of the assembly, his power gradually increased; and it was a short transition from the exercise of power in the name of others, to the exercise of it without consulting them.

In the towns where there was but one congregation, and that a small one, there was generally but one *teaching* presbyter associated with a number of *ruling* presbyters. This was the *pastor* or *bishop*. When the congregation increased, and the introduction of other teachers was found necessary, the first retained his place as sole pastor, and the others came in as his *assistants*; and although of the same *order* with himself, yet he alone was the responsible

*pastor*. In short, the rest of the teaching *presbyters* in this case, bore precisely the same relation to the *bishop*, on the score of rank, as *curates* bear to the *rector* in a large episcopal congregation. They were clothed with the same official power of preaching and administering ordinances with the *pastor*, and were capable, without any further ordination, of becoming pastors in their turn; but while they remained in this situation, their labours were directed by him. As a congregation under these circumstances, increased still more, and included a number of members from the neighbouring villages, some of these members, finding it inconvenient to attend the church in which the *bishop* officiated every Lord's day, began to lay plans for forming separate congregations nearer home. To this the bishop consented, on condition that the little worshipping societies thus formed, should consider themselves as still under his pastoral care, as amenable to the parent church, and as bound to obey him as their spiritual guide. When the *pastor* agreed to this arrangement, it was generally understood, that there should be but one *communion table*, and one *baptistery* in the parish; and, of course, that when the members of these neighbouring societies wished to enjoy either of the sealing ordinances, they were to attend at the parent church, and receive them from the hands of the *pastor* or *bishop* himself. At ordinary seasons they were supplied by his *curates* or *assistants*, who, in labouring in these little *oratories* or *chapels of ease*, were subject to his control. This was laying a foundation for the authority of one bishop or pastor over several congregations, which was not long afterwards claimed and generally yielded. This proved a THIRD STEP in the rise of prelacy.

The progress of the church towards prelacy was further aided by the practice of convening *synods* and *councils*. This practice began at an early period, and soon became general. The *Latins* styled these larger meetings of the clergy, *councils*, the *Greeks*, *synods*; and the laws which were enacted by these bodies, were denominated *canons*, i. e. *rules*. "These councils," says Dr. Mosheim, "changed the whole face of the church, and gave it a "new form." The order and decorum of their business required that a *president* should be appointed. The power lodged in this officer scarcely ever failed to be extended and abused. These *synods* were accustomed to meet in the capital cities of the district

or province to which the members belonged, and to confer the presidency upon the most conspicuous pastor, for the time being, of the city in which they met. And thus, by the gradual operation of habit, it came to be considered as the right of those persons, and of their successors in office. "Hence," says the learned historian just quoted, "the rights of *metropolitans* derive their origin." The order of the church required, at first, the presence of the presiding bishops, to give *regularity* to the acts of *synods* and *councils*. In a little while their presence was deemed necessary to the *validity* of these acts; and, in the *third* century, it began to be believed that without them nothing could be done. Such is the ordinary progress of human affairs. The increase of wealth, the decay of piety, the corruption of morals, and the prevalence of heresy and contention, were all circumstances highly favourable to the progress of this change, and concurring, with Jewish prejudices, pagan habits, and clerical ambition, hurried on the growing usurpation.

That the synods and councils which early began to be convened, were, *in fact*, thus employed by the ambitious clergy, to extend and confirm their power, might be proved by witnesses almost numberless. The testimony of one shall suffice. It is that of the great and good bishop, *Gregory Nazianzen*, who lived in the fourth century, and who, on being summoned by the emperor to the general council of *Constantinople*, which met in 381, addressed a letter to *Procopius*, to excuse himself from attending. In this letter he declares, "that he was desirous of avoiding all synods, "because he had never seen a good effect, or happy conclusion of any "one of them; that they rather increased than lessened the evils "they were designed to prevent; and that the love of contention, "and the *lust of power*, were there manifested in instances innumerable." *Greg. Naz. Oper.* tom. I. p. 814. Epist. 55. And, afterwards, speaking of that very council, this pious father remarks: "These conveyers of the Holy Ghost, these preachers of peace to "all men, grew bitterly outrageous and clamorous against one "another, in the midst of the church, mutually accusing each other, "leaping about as if they had been mad, under the furious impulse "of a lust of power and dominion, as if they would have rent the "whole world in pieces." He afterwards adds, "this was not the "effect of piety, but of a contention for thrones." Tom. II. 25, 27. In short, so great was the disgust of *Gregory* at the ambitious and

grasping spirit manifested by the clergy of his day, that we find him speaking on the subject in the following warm language. "Would to God there were *no prelacy*, no pre-eminence of place, no tyrannical privileges; and that we might be distinguished by virtue alone. This right and left hand, and this middle place, these higher and lower dignities, and this state-like precedency, have caused many fruitless contests and bruises, have cast many into the pit, and carried away multitudes to the place of the goats."

*Oper. tom. I. Orat. 28.* Would an eminently learned and pious bishop have spoken thus, if he had considered prelacy as of divine appointment? Or would he have suffered himself to use this language concerning the prelates of his day, and also concerning their predecessors,\* if their ambition and usurpations had not been altogether intolerable.

In the *third* century, the title of *bishop* was seldom applied to any other of the presbyters, than the different classes of *presidents* before mentioned. The only shadow which now remained of its former use was in the case of the pastors of *country parishes*, who still maintained the parochial episcopacy, under the name of *Chorepiscopi*. The ordaining power, originally vested in all presbyters alike, was in the third century seldom exercised by presbyters, unless the presiding presbyter, or bishop, was present. About this time, the name of *presbyter* was changed into that of *priest*, in consequence of the unscriptural and irrational doctrine coming into vogue, that the christian ministry was modelled after the *Jewish priesthood*. About this time also the office of *ruling elder* appears to have been laid aside; and a part of the ministry of the word bestowed upon *deacons*, contrary to the original design of their office, which was to superintend the maintenance of the poor. The *presbytery* sunk into the bishops' council. The *Synod* subserved the pretensions of the metropolitan, and there was only wanting a *general council*, and a *chief bishop*, to complete the hierarchy. Both of these the next age compliantly furnished. In the mean time, the few humble admirers of primitive parity and simplicity, who dared to remonstrate against these usurpations, were reviled

\* He speaks with nearly equal severity of the unprincipled ambition, and shameful conduct of the clergy at the council of *Nice*, which met in 325.



as promoters of faction and schism, and either thrust out of the church, or awed into silence.

When *Constantine* came to the imperial throne, in the *fourth* century, he confirmed the usurpation of the bishops by his authority, and bestowed upon them a degree of wealth and power to which they had before been strangers. He conferred new splendour on every part of the ecclesiastical system. He fostered every thing which had a tendency to convert religion from a spiritual service into a gaudy, ostentatious, dazzling ritual; and its ministers into *lords over God's heritage*, instead of *examples to the flock*. Old Testament rites, heathen ceremonies, and institutions of worldly policy, which had long before begun to enter the church, now rushed in like a flood. And what was worse, the great mass of the people, as well as of the clergy, were gratified with the change. The Jewish proselyte was pleased to see the resemblance which the economy of the Christian church began to bear to the ancient temple service. The pagan convert was daily more reconciled to a system, which he saw approximating to that which he had been long accustomed to behold in the house of his idols. And the artful politician could not but admire a hierarchy, so far subservient to the interests, and conformed to the model of the Roman empire. *Constantine* assumed to himself the right of calling general councils, of presiding in them, of determining controversies, and of fixing the bounds of ecclesiastical provinces. He formed the prelatical government after the imperial model, into great prefectures; in which arrangement, a certain pre-eminence was conferred on the bishops of *Rome*, *Antioch*, *Alexandria*, and *Constantinople*; the *first rank* being always reserved for the bishop of *Rome*, who succeeded in gradually extending his usurpation, until he was finally confirmed in it by an imperial decree.

Though an attempt has been made to trace some of the gradations by which ministerial imparity arose from small beginnings to a settled diocesan episcopacy; yet, from the very nature of the case, the *dates* of the several steps cannot be *precisely* ascertained. To definite transactions which take place in a single day, or year, or which are accomplished in a few years, it is commonly an easy task to assign dates. But, in this *gradual* change, which was more than *three centuries* in accomplishing, no reasonable man could expect to find the limits of the several steps precisely



defined ; because each step was slowly and almost insensibly taken ; and more especially, because the practice of all the churches was not *uniform*. There was no *particular time* when the transition from a state of *perfect parity*, to a fixed and acknowledged *superiority of order* took place *at once*, and therefore no such time can be assigned. It is evident from the records of antiquity that the titles of *bishop* and *presbyter* were indiscriminately applied to the same order in some churches, long after a distinction had begun to arise in others. It is equally evident, that the *ordaining* power of presbyters was longer retained in the more pure and primitive districts of the church, than where wealth, ambition, and a worldly spirit, bore greater sway. In some churches there were *several* bishops at the same time ; in others, but *one*. In some parts of the Christian world, it was the practice to consider and treat all the preaching presbyters in each church as *colleagues* and *equals* ; in others, one of the presbyters was regarded as the *pastor* or *bishop*, and the rest his *assistants*. A few early writers mention *ruling elders*, but the greater part say nothing about them ; simply because this class of officers was not found in every congregation, and was early discontinued. Further ; when the practice of choosing one of the presbyters to be *president* or *moderator*, commenced, it appeared in different forms in different churches. In one church, at least, according to *Jerome*, the presiding presbyter was *elected* by his colleagues ; in other churches, according to *Hilary*, the president came to the chair agreeably to a settled principle of *rotation*. In some cases, the presiding presbyter was vested with greater dignity and authority ; in others with less. In short, it is evident, that, in some portions of the church, a difference of *order* between *bishops* and *presbyters* was recognized in the *third* century ; in others, and perhaps generally, in the *fourth*, but in some others, not until the *fifth* century. No wonder, then, that we find a different *language* used by different fathers on this subject, for the *practice* was different ; and this fact directs us to the only rational and adequate method of interpreting their different representations.

Such being the case, what reasonable man would expect to find in the records of antiquity, any definite or satisfactory account of the rise and progress of prelacy ? If changes equally early and

important are covered with still greater darkness ; if the history of the first general council that ever met, and which agitated to its centre the whole christian church, is so obscure that even the place of its meeting is disputed, and no distinct record of its acts has ever reached our times ; what might be expected concerning an ecclesiastical innovation, so remote in its origin, so gradual in its progress, so indefinitely diversified in the shapes in which it appeared in different places at the same time, and so unsusceptible of precise and lucid exhibition ? To this question, no discerning and candid mind will be at a loss for an answer. No ; the whole of that reasoning, which confidently deduces the apostolical origin of prelacy, from its acknowledged and general, but by no means universal, prevalence in the fourth century, is mere empty declamation, as contradictory to every principle of human nature, as it is to the whole current of early history.

## LETTER IX.

PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF PRELACY—UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION—  
RECAPITULATION—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE *practical influence* of any doctrine, has been generally considered as a good test of its *truth*. *By their fruits ye shall know them*, is a rule which applies to principles as well as to men. Let us apply this rule to the case before us. If prelacy be of exclusive and unalterable divine right : If it be so essential, that there is no true church, no authorized ministry, no valid ordinances without it : If episcopal churches *alone* are in covenant with Christ, in the appointed road to heaven, and warranted to hope in the promises of God ; then we may reasonably expect and demand that all churches of this denomination, should display more of the spirit of Christ than any other classes of professing christians. The blessing of God is, beyond all question, most likely to attend those institutions which are most agreeable to his will. But we may go further. All who believe the Bible will acknowledge that there is *more* religion *in* the church, than *out* of it ; *more* of the image and love of the Redeemer among his covenanted people, than among those who are *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, and *strangers to the covenant of promise*. To deny this, would be to call in question every promise which the King of Zion has made to his people, and every advantage of union with him as their head. Now if all non-episcopal societies are to be considered as mere uncommanded associations, which have nothing to do with the church of Christ ; and, if union with that church is a privilege which belongs to Episcopalians alone ; then those who believe this

doctrine, are bound, on every christian principle, to show, that episcopal churches contain within their bosom more pure and undefiled religion, more harmony, more love for the truth as it is in Jesus, more universal holiness of heart and of life, than any, or than all other religious denominations. But is this in fact the case? Will the friends of prelacy undertake to show, that they *alone* give this evidence that they belong to Christ? Will they even undertake to show, that Episcopalians exhibit in a *pre-eminent degree*, this practical testimony, that they are the *chosen generation*, the *peculiar people*, who are purified by the blood, and quickened by the spirit of the Redeemer?

The efficacy of episcopal government in securing the unity of the church, in guarding against schism, and in promoting harmony and peace, has been much celebrated. But is there such a peculiar and benign efficacy in that form of ecclesiastical order? I am willing to refer the decision of this question to any man who is acquainted with ecclesiastical history. If we consult *Eusebius*, he will present us with a picture of the violence, the strife, and the divisions among *bishops*, and among different portions of the church, through their means, which is enough to make a christian weep. If we consult *Gregory Nazianzen*, he will tell us, in language before quoted, that prelacy "has caused many fruitless conflicts and bruises, has cast many into the pit, and carried away multitudes to the place of the goats." If we examine the history of any episcopal church on earth, we shall find it exhibiting, to say the least, as large a share of heresy, contention, and schism, as any which bears the Presbyterian form; and, what is more, we shall ever find the prelates themselves quite as forward as any others, in scenes of violence and outrage. The episcopal professor *Whitaker*, had no high opinion of the benign effects of prelacy, when he declared, that if this form of government were introduced as a remedy against schism, "the remedy was worse than the disease." "The first express attempt," says the learned Dr. *Owen*, "to corrupt and divide a church, made from within itself, was that in the church of *Jerusalem*, made by *Thebulis*, because *Simon Cleopas* was chosen *bishop*, and he was refused. The same rise had the schisms of the *Novations* and *Donatists*, the heresies of *Arius* and others." In short, the animosities and divisions in the church of Christ, which have taken their rise

from the contending interests, the lawless ambition, and the indecent strife of diocesan *bishops*, are so numerous, that history is full of them ; and so disgusting to every mind imbued with the spirit of Christianity, that it would give pain even to an opponent to dwell upon the subject. But further ; do we not all know episcopal churches, at the present day, in which all varieties of theological creeds are received, from the purest orthodoxy, down to the most blasphemous heresies, and that by all ranks of their clergy, as well as their lay members. Is this that *unity of the spirit* of which the Scriptures speak ? Is this that *unity* which constitutes men *one body in Christ*, and which will prepare them for the more sublime and perfect union of the church triumphant above ?

Again ; if the episcopal church *alone* is in communion with Christ ; if she possesses the only authorized ministry, and the only valid ordinances ; then we have a right to expect that she will pre-eminently display the purifying effects of these peculiar privileges. For if the christian ministry and ordinances were given to *edify the body of Christ*, and are the great instruments which God does, *in fact*, employ for this purpose, as both Presbyterians and Episcopalians concur in believing ; then we must suppose that *more*, much more, of their sacred influence will appear among those who possess these precious gifts, than among those who possess them not. To suppose that an *invalid* ministry and ordinances will be, *in general*, as useful in their effects, as those which are *valid*, is to surrender one of the most important distinctions between truth and error.

Do we, then, actually find in episcopal churches more real and vital religion, than in other churches ? Do we actually find among them more of the image of Christ ; more attachment to evangelical truth ; more faithful preaching of *Jesus Christ, and him crucified* ; more brotherly love ; more pure and holy living ; more care to avoid a sinful conformity to the world ; more vigorous and scriptural discipline ; more zeal for the divine glory ; and a temper and conversation more suited to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, than in the mass of non-episcopal churches ? In short, are episcopalians, *as a denomination*, more serious, devout, self-denied, benevolent, meek, forgiving, and heavenly-minded, than Presbyterians, *as a denomination* ? Perhaps it will be said, that much of what we call *vital religion*, is rather *superstitious*, and that with

respect to *true* and *rational* piety, there is full as much, if not more, in episcopal than in other churches. On this question I will not dwell long. By *real religion*, I mean a conformity of temper and practice with that system of evangelical truth which is exhibited in the writings, and which adorned the lives of bishop *Jewel*, bishop *Hall*, bishop *Davenant*, archbishop *Usher*, and many other illustrious prelates of the church of *England*, of former ages ; that system which has been since defended and exemplified by the *Herveys*, the *Romaines*, the *Newtons*, the *Scotts*, and a multitude more of unmitred divines of the same church, in later times ; that evangelical system which is embodied in the articles of that church, and which breathes in the greatest part of her liturgy and offices ; that system which exalts the divine Redeemer to the throne ; which places the penitent sinner in the dust, at his footstool ; which teaches men to rely solely on the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Saviour, for pardon and life ; and which, at the same time, prompts them to *follow holiness*, and to be *zealous of good works*. Is there more of *this* kind of religion in episcopal churches than in any others ? I cannot suppose that there is a single Episcopalian in our country, either so ill informed or so prejudiced, as to believe, for a moment, that his own church is in the least degree superior, in any of these respects, to her Presbyterian neighbours.

But, perhaps, this reasoning will be objected to by our episcopal brethren. They will tell us, that there is often a wide difference between entertaining correct opinions, and pursuing a suitable practice ; that men may and do *hold the truth in unrighteousness* ; and, that the same reasoning, if admitted, would prove that no form of religion is true, because in *every* church we may find many lukewarm and immoral professors. This objection, however, is nothing to the purpose. It is merely an evasion of the argument. We all daily make and allow the distinction between *principles*, and the *conduct* of those who profess them. The former are often *excellent*, while the latter is *base*. We protest, and with the strongest reason, against the conclusion, that religion is false, because some men who profess to believe it are immoral ; or that a particular church is not a true church of Christ, because many of her members act in a manner unworthy of their profession. But our reasoning and conclusion, in this case, are wholly of a different kind.



We only contend, that the ministry and the ordinances of religion, which claim to be *exclusively valid*, ought to prove themselves *more* efficacious than those which are *destitute of validity*. We contend that there is, and must ever be, *more* virtue and holiness *in* the church of Christ, than *out* of it. We contend, in short, that in that *household of God*, to which his gracious promises, and his life-giving Spirit are vouchsafed, while we shall always find much corruption, we must expect to find, *in general*, much *more* of the life and power of religion; *more* fervent piety, *more* zeal for the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and *more* righteousness of life, than among those who have no connexion with that household. If not, wherein is the greater advantage of being in the church, than in the world? Nor do we, by taking this ground, furnish either an infidel or an heretic with a handle against us. An enemy of the gospel may come into all of our churches, and point to some, perhaps to many, of our members, who do not by any means walk *worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called*. Would he have a right from this fact, to infer the falsity of our system of faith? No; the obvious distinction between *principles* and the *conduct* of those who profess them, would, if he were a candid man, prevent him from drawing this inference. But if an infidel could come into our solemn assemblies, even the purest of them, and not only *assert*, but *prove*, that there is *no more* either of strict morality or fervent piety, among the *professors* of religion, than among its *despisers*; if he could do this, then indeed he might, and ought, to triumph over us. As long as he could only with truth say, "*Some of you Christians are as bad as infidels;*" I would confidently reply, "*They are not Christians but hypocrites*; for, if they had any portion of the spirit of their Master, they would not act thus." But if he could really make it appear that Christians are *in general*, and *as a body*, in no respect better than infidels, he would certainly establish his argument. This, however, blessed be God! the infidel cannot do; and the very circumstance of the enemies of Christianity marking with such eager triumph, every case of unworthy conduct in the professors of religion, shows that, in their opinion, christian principles *require* more holiness than infidel principles require, and are *expected to produce* more. The same reasoning we adopt with our episcopal brethren. We do not ask them to produce *perfection* in their church; we do not ask them to show,

that *all* their members act conformably with their principles ; but we insist upon their showing that there is, *in general*, a much *larger portion* of fervent piety, and of strict morality, in their church, than in any of the non-episcopal churches ; and until they do this, every unprejudiced man will consider their claim of being alone “ in covenant with Christ,” as unreasonable as it is unscriptural.

It does not affect the solidity of this argument, that some churches which Presbyterians consider as not *regularly* organized, upon *scriptural* principles, nevertheless embrace in their bosom a large portion of unaffected piety. If we undertook to maintain that the Presbyterian church is the only real church on earth, and alone in covenant with Christ the head, such a fact would, indeed, present a difficulty of no easy solution. But we make no such arrogant claim. Wherever the unfeigned love of our divine Saviour, an humble reliance on his atoning sacrifice, and a corresponding holiness of life, pervade any denomination of Christians, we hail them as brethren in Christ ; we acknowledge them to be a true church ; and although we may observe and lament imperfections in their outward government, we consider them as truly in covenant with the King of Zion, as ourselves. All this is perfectly consistent with believing, as we do, that *Presbyterian* church government was the *primitive* model, and that it is the *duty* of every church to conform to this model. It is certainly the *duty* of every man to keep the whole law of God ; yet as we do not deny that an individual professor is a real Christian, because we perceive some imperfections in his character ; so neither do we deny a church to be a true church of Christ, because she is not *in all respects* conformed to our ideas of scriptural purity. We consider our episcopal brethren as having wandered far from the simplicity of apostolic order. But what then ? Must we arrogantly *unchurch* them on that account ? By no means. We lament their deviation ; but notwithstanding this, can freely embrace them as members of the church universal ; and were there no other church with which we could commune, should feel no scruple in holding communion with them as brethren.

Those who contend for the divine right of diocesan episcopacy, and for the doctrine of uninterrupted succession, in its most rigid form, often ask us, how we deduce our succession in the ministry ? They profess to be able to trace their own line of ecclesiastical

descent, with the utmost ease ; and gravely present us with long catalogues of bishops, from the Apostles down to the present day. Having done this, they demand from us similar catalogues, and a similar deduction. I shall not attempt at present to discuss the questions, whether such succession is *essential* to the christian ministry ; and, whether, supposing it to be so, it can be distinctly *traced* through the medium of regular historical documents, from the apostolic age to the present. On both these\* questions the most learned and pious episcopal divines have been divided in opinion. *Chillingworth*, *Barrow*, Bishop *Hoadley*, and a number more, have taken the negative side ; pronouncing the claim of succession to be as futile as it is unnecessary ; and assailing it with the most pointed ridicule, as well as with formidable arguments.

But without entering into this controversy, I will take for granted, that the uninterrupted succession, is *essential* ; that it is the only channel through which ministers of the present day can have the apostolic commission transmitted to them. Supposing this to be the case, nothing is more easy, than to show, on presbyterian principles, that the succession in *our* church is as distinct, regular, and unbroken, as that of the *episcopal* church.

From the time of the Apostles to the æra of the reformation, *our* line of succession is certainly as good as *theirs*, for they are *one and the same*. When the reformers began their work, they found all the churches of Great Britain under episcopal government. Until that time, therefore, our opponents themselves being judges, a regular line of ordination had been preserved. If there be any doubt of this, it is a doubt which as much affects their succession as our own. In short, until this period, the two lines coincide, share the same fortunes, and are to be traced by the same means. When the reformation began, and the popish doctrine of imparity was discarded by a considerable portion of the Christians of Britain, the *presbyters*, who had been ordained by the *bishops*, undertook themselves to ordain in their turn ; and from them it is as easy to trace the succession *in the line of presbyters*, as it is for our episcopal brethren to trace it *in the line of diocesan bishops*. Now if, as we have proved in the foregoing letters, the right of ordination, according to scripture and primitive usage, belongs to *presbyters*, it is evident that the succession through *them*, is as valid as any other : or rather, to speak more properly, it is only so far as *any*

succession flows through the line of *presbyters*, that it is either regular or valid. It is the *laying on of the hands of the presbytery*, that constitutes a scriptural ordination ; and it is because episcopal bishops are *presbyters*, and assisted in all ordinations by *other presbyters*, that we consider their ordaining acts, on the principles of scripture and primitive usage, as valid.

I have now presented, within as narrow limits as possible, a sketch of the arguments, by which we support our doctrine of the christian ministry. Much reasoning, and much testimony which would have served to strengthen our argument, have been necessarily omitted. But enough has been produced to establish the apostolic and primitive character of our church.

You have seen, that the scriptures contain but *one commission* for the gospel ministry; that *bishop* and *presbyter* are uniformly used in the New Testament as convertible titles for the same office ; that the same *character* and *powers*, are also in the sacred writings ascribed interchangeably to *bishops* and *presbyters*, thus plainly establishing their identity of *order* as well as of *name* ; and that the christian church was organized by the apostles, after the model of the Jewish *synagogue*, which was undoubtedly *Presbyterian* in its form.

You have seen that all arguments which our episcopal brethern profess to derive from scripture in favour of their system, are perfectly nugatory, and do not yield it the least solid support.

You have seen that the *fathers* of the first two centuries are so far from furnishing a single passage which gives even a semblance of aid to the episcopal cause, that, like the scriptures, they every where speak a language wholly inconsistent with it, and favourable only to the doctrine of ministerial parity.

You have seen that the great body of the *reformers* and other *witnesses* for the truth, of different ages and nations, with one voice maintained the same doctrine, as taught in scripture, and in the primitive church ; and that even the most conspicuous *English* reformers, while they assisted in organizing an episcopal establishment in their own country, defended it on the ground of *human expediency*, and the *will of the magistrate*, rather than that of *divine right*.

You have seen that the church of *England*, and those churches

which have immediately descended from her, STAND ABSOLUTELY ALONE, IN THE WHOLE PROTESTANT WORLD, in representing *bishops* as an order of clergy superior to *presbyters* ; all other protestants, even those who adopt a sort of prelacy, having pronounced it to be a mere *human invention*.

You have seen some of the most learned and pious bishops and other divines of the church of *England*, utterly disclaiming the divine right of diocesan episcopacy ; and declaring that they considered a great majority of the clergy of that church, in later as well as earlier times, as of the same opinion with themselves.

Finally ; you have seen that the *gradual introduction* of prelacy, within the first four centuries, was not only *practicable*, but one of the most *natural* and *probable* of all events ; and that the most competent judges, and profound inquirers into early history, have pronounced that it actually took place.

After the exhibition of testimony so various, abundant, and explicit, I cannot suppose, my brethren, that any of you can have a remaining doubt. This testimony not only establishes, in the most perfect manner, the *validity* of the ordinations and the ministry of our church ; but it goes further, and proves that they are *superior* to those of our episcopal neighbours ; more scriptural, more conformable to primitive usage, and possessing more of that whole character which is fitted to satisfy an humble, simple-hearted, Bible Christian. Be not moved, therefore, when the zealous advocates for the divine right of diocesan episcopacy charge you with *schism*, for being out of the communion of their church, and denounce your ministry and ordinances as invalid. After reading the foregoing sheets, I trust you will be prepared to receive such charges and such denunciations, with the same calm, dispassionate, conscious superiority, that you feel when a partizan of the papacy denounces you for rejecting the supremacy of the *pope*, and questions the possibility of your salvation out of the church of *Rome*. No, brethren, be not alarmed ! there is nothing in their claims to intimidate the most tender conscience ; nothing to excite a scruple in the most cautious mind. Let them exhibit, and assert, and reiterate their exclusive pretensions, with all the confidence of zeal and with all the heat of disputation. Let none of these things

move you. You are already in the bosom of a church as nearly conformed to apostolic order as any on earth. If the testimony of Scripture ; if the writings of the fathers, in the earliest and purest ages of the church ; if the weight of numbers, of piety, and of learning, throughout the protestant world, be of any value, they are clearly on our side. Every successive step that I take in this inquiry, impresses on my mind a deeper conviction of the truth of my principles, and of my obligation to bless God for casting my lot in the Presbyterian church.

But, brethren, while you feel this confidence, let me warn you against being partakers with our opponents in the positiveness and bigotry which *some* of them manifest. I feel much satisfaction in knowing that you generally cherish the most liberal sentiments towards all denominations of Christians ; that you are disposed to embrace as brethren all who give evidence that they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, however they may differ from you in forms of worship, or in modes of external order. Cultivate to a still higher degree this disposition, so ornamental to your character as Christians, and as members of civil society. Let no provocation on the part of others induce you to abandon it. Remember that you are not yet free from a criminal *bigotry*, if you have not learned to *bear with bigots*. It is a difficult lesson ; but we are required to learn it. You will not consider me as framing an apology for error, or as exhorting you to look upon it with approbation. It is your duty to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*. But “let us not,” to use the language of the amiable *Ganganelli*—a language more honourable to him than the triple crown—“Let us not lay aside *charity* to maintain *faith*.” This is never necessary ; and when it is done, is always the effect of that *unhallowed fire* in which our Lord has declared he *has no pleasure*.

Even if our episcopal brethren were *unanimous* in maintaining and urging the unscriptural claim which has been refuted, we ought to dismiss all bitterness and resentment, and as much as possible, to cherish towards them a spirit of conciliation and respect. But my firm persuasion is, as expressed in a former letter, that scarcely a *twentieth* part of that sect of Christians in the United States, are disposed either to advance or concur in such a claim.



It is the delusion of a few only ; a delusion which I have good reason to believe is rejected and reprobated, by the great body of the clergy, as well as the laity of that communion. Let me, then, guard you against the injustice of charging on a whole denomination the odium of such opinions. Impute them to none but those who fasten the charge on themselves, by an open avowal. Convince Episcopalians, by the liberality and candour of your deportment, that you have no prejudices against them as a church. And even convince those who embrace every opportunity of denouncing your ministry and ordinances, that you cannot be *overcome of evil*, but that you know how to *overcome evil with good*.

Numerous are the considerations which press upon us the duty of cultivating peace and love with all denominations of professing Christians. A bold and impious infidelity abounds. We are surrounded with thousands who not only neglect but despise all religion. How will it rejoice the hearts of these enemies of our common faith, to see those who profess to be followers of the same Master, to be animated by the same spirit of love, and to be candidates for the same heaven, either avoiding the society of each other, or coming together only to deal in reciprocal reproaches and anathemas. Be it YOUR study, brethren, whatever others may do to *give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully*. Let it be apparent to all, that you cherish no dispositions, advance no claims, employ no language, which can reasonably disturb the harmony of your intercourse with other Christians. Let it be seen that you know how to esteem those who differ from you, as well as to contend for the truth ; and to cover with the mantle of charity, that which you cannot approve. There is a charm in this conduct, which even infidelity itself cannot resist. It will do more than a thousand carnal weapons to *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, and to “ extort a trembling homage” from those who *know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

The present perturbed state of the world, is another motive to peace and love among Christians. The struggles of ambition, grasping and devouring every thing within its reach ; the desolations of war, widely spread, and murderous beyond former example ; and the prevalence of those selfish and ferocious passions which fill the earth with animosity, hatred, violence, and destruc-

tion, all concur, with infidelity, to call the minds of men away from the truth, and to prevent them from listening to the benign and heavenly voice of religion. Nor is this all. A consideration still more solemn presses itself upon the serious mind. Providence has cast our lot in those *latter days*, which are pre-eminently characterised in Scripture as *perilous times*. Trials are coming on the church, which, were not her king in the midst of her, would appal the stoutest heart. Is this a time for the followers of Christ to be divided? Is this a time for them to *fall out by the way*, and to *bite and devour one another*? Alas! no. Under these circumstances, how solemn is the call to union and love! In this situation, how obvious is the duty of all who believe the gospel, to unite in exhibiting our common Christianity to mankind in her meekest, loveliest, and most attractive form! How honourable might not such an example be to religion! how ornamental to the church! how comfortable to ourselves! how useful to our troubled world!

The equal rights and privileges enjoyed in this country, by all sects of Christians, impose on them an additional obligation to live together in harmony and peace. Our civil government makes no discrimination among churches. In this respect, we all stand upon a level, and are permitted to worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences, having none to molest or to make us afraid. Under these happy circumstances, what temptation is there to cultivate a spirit of bigotry or contention? Why can we not quietly and meekly enjoy our privileges together? Let us prove to the world, that there is something in the spirit of Christianity which enables those who possess it to differ from each other with more mildness, urbanity, and genuine benevolence, than the wrangling politicians around us

Finally, Christian brethren, remember that the period is hastening on, when all the real followers of Christ shall meet in a more harmonious and a more happy world. Oceans now roll between them; mountains and deserts keep them asunder; and differences of opinion and denomination, often more inhospitable than the most dreary desert, place at a distance from each other those for whom Christ died. But in that blessed and holy society which you are speedily to join; in that glorified *multitude which no man can number, gathered out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues*, these differences will be for ever unknown. There

perfect holiness and perfect love shall reign undisturbed and eternal. Let this happy prospect fill you with the tenderest love to all who bear the image of Christ ; let it comfort you amidst the contentions and divisions of the present imperfect state ; and let it excite you daily to cherish those dispositions which will form the best preparation for that kingdom where all christians shall *appear* to each other, what they are in fact, *one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

END OF PART I.

**LETTERS**

**CONCERNING**

**THE CONSTITUTION AND ORDER**

**OF**

**THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.**

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**BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.**

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**PART II.**



# LETTERS

ON

## THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

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### LETTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

#### CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IT is more than two years since I addressed you in a series of "Letters on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry, as deduced from Scripture and Primitive Usage." The resolution to call your attention to that subject was reluctantly formed, after much deliberation, and in compliance with what appeared to me an evident and imperious demand of duty. A love of controversy makes no part of my character. Neither my taste nor my talents are by any means suited to the field of contention. But when a minister of the gospel perceives any thing which is likely to have an unfriendly influence on the church of Christ, to which he has solemnly devoted himself, every consideration of faithfulness forbids him to be idle. Such influence I saw, or thought I saw, was likely to result from certain publications, and other efforts, which had been made by some respectable individuals among our episcopal brethren, in this city, and in different parts of the state, for several years preceding. The nature and tendency of these efforts are well understood by many of you, but they ought to be understood by all.

For more than twenty years after the establishment of American Independence, the Presbyterians of New York dwelt in peace and harmony with their episcopal neighbours. They well recollected, indeed, the long course of oppressions and provocations which they



had suffered, by means of episcopal influence, prior to the revolution. They recollected that, for more than half a century, besides supporting their own churches, they had been forced to contribute to the support of the episcopal church, already enriched and strengthened by governmental aid. They recollected in how many instances the fairest and most laudable exertions to promote the interest of their denomination, were opposed, thwarted, and frustrated, by the direct interference of the same favoured sect. But when our national independence and equal rights became established ; when all denominations of Christians were placed on the same footing, with respect to the state, and left to enjoy their privileges together, the Presbyterians were disposed to forget every injury ; to cover every former subject of uneasiness with the mantle of charity ; to dwell in equal concord and love with their brethren of every name. It was not supposed, indeed, during this period of tranquillity, that Presbyterians and Episcopalians were *agreed* in their views either of evangelical truth, or of ecclesiastical order ; or that they considered all the points in which they differed as of small importance. But while both thought for themselves, and pursued their own views of doctrine and worship, they avoided an *unnecessary*, and especially, an *irritating* and *offensive* obtrusion of their points of difference ; and, above all, never seem to have thought, on either side, of that system of proscription and attack, which our episcopal brethren have since chosen to commence.

The formal and open commencement of this system may be dated in the year 1804. Previous to that period, indeed, several sermons, and other fugitive pamphlets, had evinced a disposition on the part of some individuals, to revive and urge certain claims, as unfounded in scripture as they are offensive to liberal minds. But in that year there appeared, in the city of New York, the first of a series of larger publications, which evidently had for their object a system of more bold and decisive proscription than had been ventured upon for a considerable time before. These publications, among other doctrines, were professedly intended to maintain and disseminate the following, viz. “ That the power of ordination to  
“ the christian ministry is, by divine appointment, vested exclusive-  
“ ly in diocesan bishops ; that where these bishops are wanting,  
“ there is no authorized ministry, no true church, no valid ordi-  
“ nances ; that, of course, the Presbyterian, and all other non-epis-

“ episcopal churches, and ministers, are not only unauthorized, and perfectly destitute of validity, but are to be viewed as institutions founded in rebellion and schism ; and that all who are in communion with such non-episcopal churches, are aliens from Christ,” “ out of the appointed road to heaven,” have no interest in the promises of God, and no hope but in his “ uncovenanted mercy,” “ which may be extended to them, in common with the serious and conscientious heathen.” Books containing doctrines of this kind, had been published and sent abroad with much assiduity, for more than a year, before any Pre byterian came forward to refute them, or to vindicate primitive simplicity and order ; and since that time, similar books have been printed, re-printed, new modelled, and circulated, especially in the city and state of New York, with a degree of zeal and perseverance altogether new and extraordinary.

Nor is this all. These books have been put into the hands of non-episcopalians. Presbyterians have been personally addressed on the subject, and attempts made to seduce them from their church, on the express allegation that they were totally destitute of an authorized ministry, and of valid ordinances. And, that nothing might be wanting to fix the character and purpose of these measures, they were accompanied with declarations, that a state of warfare with the Presbyterian church, on the subject of episcopacy, was earnestly wished for, and considered as one of the most probable means of promoting the episcopal cause.

It was not possible for one denomination of christians to act in a more inoffensive manner towards another, than *we* had uniformly done towards our episcopal brethren. We had never attempted to unchurch them. We had never, directly or indirectly, called in question the validity of their ministrations or ordinances. We had never, on any occasion, obtruded our particular views of church order, as essential either to the *being* or *prosperity* of the body of Christ. On the contrary, whenever we had occasion, from the pulpit or the press, to instruct our people on those points in which we differ from Episcopalians, it was always done in a manner respectful and conciliatory, and perfectly consistent with acknowledging them as a sister church ; a sister, by no means, indeed, in our estimation, free from error ; but yet sufficiently near the primitive model to be regarded as a church of Christ. All this,

however, did not secure us from the treatment of which you have heard.

Under these circumstances, when we were virtually denounced and excommunicated ; when the name of a christian church was denied us ; when our people were warned to abandon the ministry of their pastors, under the penalty of being regarded as *rebels* and *schismatics* both by God and man ; when more than insinuations of this kind were presented and reiterated, from the pulpit and the press, on every practicable occasion, and in almost every possible variety of form ; when, by the frequency and the confidence with which they were brought forward, some in our communion were perplexed, others, more discerning and better informed, rendered indignant, and all appeared to feel the propriety of vindicating the abused ordinances of Christ ; it became at least *excusable* to say something in our own defence. It was no bitterness against our episcopal brethren ; no love of controversy ; no restless ambition ; no desire to intrude into another denomination for the purpose of making proselytes, that dictated an attempt to justify our principles. The attempt was purely defensive, and was demanded by every consideration of duty to the souls of men, and of fidelity to our Master in heaven.

Impressed with this conviction, I addressed to you my *Letters on the Christian Ministry*. Such a manual appeared to me to be much wanted ; a manual which was intended to present a concise view of the whole subject, without the useless appendages, and the offensive recriminations which have been too frequently admitted. In composing this work, it was my sincere aim to render it as free from every thing personal or irritating as possible. Accordingly I attacked no particular writer. I avoided even mentioning the name of any American who had written in opposition to that apostolic truth and order which we maintain. My arguments were stated, as far as the nature of the undertaking admitted, in the abstract ; and a studious care was exercised to exhibit the whole in language of the most mild and conciliatory character. In all this it was not supposed that offence could reasonably be taken by any, and least of all by our episcopal brethren. As they had been in the *habit*, for several years before the appearance of my volume, of publishing, and distributing, even beyond the bounds of their own society, books, in which the episcopal doctrine was

warmly urged, and Presbyterian principles loaded with opprobrious epithets; it was supposed that they would scarcely think it very consistent or decent to attack with violence, if at all, a publication so moderate, so respectful, and so exclusively intended for Presbyterians. It was, therefore, my prevailing expectation, that the work would be considered as not belonging to the polemic class and would be suffered to pass without a reply.

But in this I was mistaken. With all the mildness and inoffensiveness of their character, my *letters* no sooner made their appearance, than murmurs of resentment, and threats of overwhelming refutation were heard from various quarters. These threats had not been long proclaimed, before attempts were made to fulfil them. The first who presented himself before the public, as an assailant, was Mr. *Thomas Y. How* (since the Rev. Mr. *How*, of New York,) who, in about six months after the publication of my volume, produced an angry and vehement pamphlet, which he announced as *introductory* to a more full discussion of the subject. Mr. *How*, after an interval of six months more, was followed by the Rev. Dr. *Bowden*, *Professor of Moral Philosophy, Logic, and Belles Lettres in Columbia College*. This gentleman, who had been long versed in the episcopal controversy, and who, more than twenty years ago, stepped forth as a champion of the hierarchy, did me the honour again to take the field against me, and undertook in a work, at least formidable in size, to give a complete refutation of all my arguments, and to prostrate the Presbyterian cause. About the same time with Dr. *Bowden's* two volumes, there appeared, on the same side, and with the same object, the first of a series of letters addressed to me by the Rev. Dr. *Kemp*, *Rector of Great Choptank, in Maryland*. And, finally, with this number, the Rev. Dr. *Hobart* has united himself, as an occasional remarker on my *letters*, in the *Churchman's Magazine*, published in the city of New York, for the contents of which he acknowledges himself, both as editor and proprietor, to be responsible.

To be fallen upon by so many assailants, and with so much vehemence, is a compliment as great as it was unexpected. My thanks are due to these gentlemen for conferring on my work a degree of importance, and unwittingly disclosing that it has made a degree of impression, which I had never ventured to anticipate or to claim. I have also to thank them for another favour. Their

violent attacks, and their numerous cavils, have induced me to examine the subject with more care, and to pursue my inquiries respecting it to a greater extent than I should probably otherwise have done. The result is, a deeper conviction than ever of the weakness of their cause, and of the apostolic character of our church.

With respect to Mr. *How's* pamphlet, it is written with so much heat and impetuosity ; discovers such a singular want of acquaintance with radical parts of the subject ; and breathes a spirit so evidently calculated, with all sober and impartial readers, to discredit the author himself, more than the object of his attack ; that my first resolution, as well as the general advice of my friends, was to let it pass unnoticed. I could scarcely, indeed, form a more selfish wish than that all my opponents might write thus. And it is certain that Mr. *How* would never have received a syllable of public reply from me, had there been any reason to suppose that his work would fall into the hands of none but the discerning and well-informed. Recollecting, however, that all readers are not qualified to distinguish between assertion and proof, between lofty assumption and solid argument, I felt doubtful whether some remarks might not be usefully made, especially on some of the more extraordinary and exceptionable parts of his book. The appearance of Dr. *Bowden's* work terminated my doubts. This work, written in a style of more calmness, and rather more decorum than Mr. *How's* ; more respectable on the score of sober and grave reasoning ; and discovering more acquaintance with the subject, appeared to me entitled to some reply. In making this reply, I determined to bring into one view, the most material allegations and reasonings of all the gentlemen who have honoured me with their notice ; and, as they have taken care to praise and quote each other, they cannot be displeased at being associated together in my remarks.

And in the first place, my acknowledgments are due to these gentlemen, and particularly to Mr. *How*, for being so kind as to remove all uncertainty with respect to the real nature of the opinions, which they hold. Dr. *Bowden*, it is true, does not appear very fond of committing himself by explicit avowals ; but Mr. *How* manifests no scruple in declaring, in his usual "masterly" manner, that he considers Presbyterian clergymen as having no more right

to administer sacraments, or to ordain, than so many "*laymen* or *women*;" that all their ministrations are *perfectly unauthorised* and *void*; that without episcopal ordination, there is no ministry, no church; that no case of *necessity*, however *extreme*, can justify any minister or body of ministers, in attempting to ordain others, or to form churches, without the intervention of a prelate's hands; and that all who are not in communion with an episcopal bishop are *out of the church*, and have no *covenanted* title to salvation. *Letters*, p. 16. 68, and elsewhere. Mr. *How* also lets us know that Dr. *Bowden* holds similar opinions, p. 68.; and truly the doctor himself repeatedly uses language which admits of no other construction. It is agreeable to find opponents thus candid and explicit. We now know the nature of the claim which these gentlemen advance, and of course, how to meet them. I am happy also to perceive, that in my former publication, I have neither misrepresented nor exaggerated their sentiments. They are precisely such as I ascribed to the *third*, or highest-toned class of Episcopals. It is to the claims of this class only, and not to the moderate and liberal part of that denomination, that the reasonings in the following sheets are intended to apply.

But while these gentlemen are very undisguised and decided in advancing their claims, they write in a manner strangely vague and obscure on another point. Even admitting, (what we cannot admit, for we know the contrary,) that the question whether episcopacy was *in fact*, the primitive constitution of the church, were decided in favour of our episcopal brethren; still another question remains, viz. Is a compliance with that constitution so unalterably and indispensably binding on the church, that there can be no church, no ministry, no ordinances without it? These questions are totally distinct, and ought never to be confounded. Yet Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* almost uniformly confound them; and seem to think that if the former question be answered in the affirmative, the latter must of course be answered in a similar manner. In a few instances, indeed, they admit the distinction to which I allude, and assert, that their only object is to establish the apostolical institution of episcopacy, without undertaking to pronounce on the consequences of rejecting it. But it is evident that, for the most part, they entirely lose sight of this distinction, and write as if the establishment of the fact, that prelacy existed in the primitive church, must



effectually destroy the character of all churches not found in possession of that form of government. Whether these positions so totally distinct are so generally confounded by my opponents for want of clear and distinguishing views, or with design, I presume not to say. But every discerning reader will be on his guard against impositions from either source.

These gentlemen, indeed, themselves assert, with the whole body of episcopal writers, that the apostles never intended to lay down a model of church government, which should be, *in all its parts*, perpetually binding : and, of course, that the church is not bound to be, *in all respects*, conformed to the apostolic model. I am not now inquiring whether this doctrine be correct or not. But if it be, how can the want of prelacy destroy the character and even the existence of the church ? In what part of scripture is it said, that every *other part* of the apostolic government of the church is *mutable*, and may be modified by human wisdom ; but that dispensing with the single point of *bishops*, is fatal to the whole ? My opponents, then, even on their own principles, are far from having accomplished the task which they prescribed to themselves. They have never shown, and are not able to show, that prelacy was instituted by the apostles ; but even if they *could*, many links would still be wanting in the chain of proof, that this form of government is *so* necessary, that there can be no church without it.

Mr. How endeavours to represent my work as an *unprovoked attack* on the episcopal church, and to throw upon it all the odium of *aggression*. To those who are acquainted with the incontrovertible facts stated in the beginning of this letter, such a representation will appear something more than strange ! If to state and defend the principles of my own church, after they had been frequently and violently attacked ; if a calm and respectful plea against a sentence of excommunication from the church of Christ ; if an attempt to show, that we, as Presbyterians, are not *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, and *strangers to the covenant of promise* ; if a work designed to prove that our ministry and ordinances have as fair a claim to divine warrant as those of our episcopal brethren ; and that they, in denying us the character of a church, and in consigning us over, with the heathen, to the uncovenanted mercies of God, act wholly without warrant—if these things constitute an unprovoked attack on the episcopal church—then, indeed,

I have been guilty of such an attack. But I am not afraid that any one who is acquainted with facts, and who understands the import of terms, will either bring such a charge himself, or consider it with respect when brought by others.

Another charge which these gentlemen concur in urging, is no less unexpected and extraordinary. It is, that I have written with great *bitterness*, and that even my moderation is *affected* and *insidious*. This is a point concerning which no man can be an impartial judge in his own case. But, after receiving so many respectable suffrages in favour of the mildness and decorum of my style ; after receiving the acknowledgments of so many moderate and candid Episcopalians in different parts of the United States, both clergymen and laymen, that I had avoided asperity and bitterness to a very unusual degree ; it is impossible to avoid suspecting that these gentlemen, (who so far as I know stand alone in making this charge,) have felt irritated by statements which they could not deny, and by arguments which they could not refute ; and that they have mistaken both for bitterness and abuse. Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* never discover so much wounded feeling and irascible temper, as when they meet with intimations of any affinity between some of their high-toned doctrines, and those of *popery*. The intimations of this kind which my book contains, were made neither lightly, nor with passion ; but with a conscientious persuasion of their correctness. This persuasion remains with undiminished or rather with increased force. And it happens, unfortunately for these gentlemen, that similar charges of popish origin and tendency, have been brought against several of the same doctrines, by some of the most pious and learned bishops of their own church. Nor can I forbear to add, that the pointed resentment which my opponents manifest at every suggestion of this kind, is calculated to excite the suspicion, that they feel it more easy to *rail* at such intimations than to *answer* them.

But Dr. *Bowden* makes a further complaint, which is still more extraordinary. He thinks me very censurable for not having stated, in addition to the arguments in support of our opinions, the principal answers, “ the triumphant replies,” which episcopal writers have given to these arguments. In one case, particularly, he addresses me thus : “ You certainly must have heard of, if you have

“not read, *Slater’s Original Draught*, in answer to lord King, “which it has always been confidently said, made his lordship a “convert to diocesan episcopacy. If you have heard of *Slater’s* “book, but not read it, you should have made a point of procuring “it, and of stating his answer, that your readers might have a “fair opportunity of judging for themselves.” *Vol. I. Letter 7. p. 186.* I can assure this learned professor, who so kindly undertakes to instruct me in my duty, that I both possessed and had read *Slater’s* work, long before I ever heard of Dr. *Bowden* or his *Letters*; and that, however it impressed lord King, it was so far from converting me to diocesan episcopacy, that it rather served to confirm me in my Presbyterian principles. But is it possible that this complaint of Dr. *Bowden* can be seriously made? Did I not distinctly announce, in my *introductory* letter, that my object was, not to write a full and complete treatise, but a small and popular manual? Did I not fairly apprise my readers, that this plan would “lay me under the necessity of being every where extremely “brief, and of totally excluding many topics, both of argument and “illustration, which might be profitably introduced?” And did I not, to relieve in some measure, the difficulty thence arising, promise, that “no arguments should be urged, but those which I “believed to have stood immovably solid, after every attempt to “answer them?” Was it my duty, then; would it have been proper, after all this, when I felt myself obliged to omit many arguments on my own side, which were, in my view, powerful and important; to introduce arguments, many of them frivolous, and most of them destitute of real force, merely for the purpose of swelling my work into a number of volumes, and preventing it from being read by those for whom it was intended? I have the charity to believe, that if Dr. *Bowden*, had indulged a moment’s reflection, he would have been ashamed to urge a complaint so unworthy of his grave character.

Besides, if it was my duty to state in detail all those arguments which the fond partiality of some episcopal writers has been pleased to style “unanswerable,” “triumphant,” “demonstrative,” &c. was it not Dr. *Bowden’s* duty to do the same with respect to the arguments of Presbyterian writers? But has he done this? If I do not mistake, every impartial reader will pronounce, that in my

little manual, I have gone as far, if not further, in stating the arguments and replies of my opponents, than this gentleman has in his two volumes.

These gentlemen, in the course of their strictures, have allowed themselves frequently to employ language of which I cannot forbear to exhibit a specimen. Dr. *Lowden* charges me with "contemptible cavilling ; with " contemptible puerilities ;" with "misrepresentations gross to excess ;" with writing "nonsense," "palpable nonsense;" &c. &c. &c. Mr. *How's* pamphlet abounds with language, which I hope he will reconsider, in his cooler moments, with shame and regret. He charges me with "a continued strain of misrepresentation ;" with "an outrage of decency itself ;" with, a construction "as puerile as it is disengenuous ;" with "fanatical absurdities;" with "violations of the plain language of scripture, as presumptuous as are to be met with in the entire annals of fanaticism;" with "talking like a deranged fanatic ;" and with advancing allegations which I "ought to know, and cannot but know," to be groundless. In fact, he frequently imputes to me, in terms a little indirect and softened, known and deliberate falsehood. And on one occasion, he permits himself to address me thus : "You could not possibly "have adopted a mode of address more calculated to sour the minds "of your readers, or better fitted to indulge the bitterness of your "own heart. It is direct and insidious, covering under the mask of "moderation and kindness, all the loftiness of pride, and all the "rankling of passion." p. 16. Dr. *Hobart* represents me as writing with great "arrogance" and "bitterness," and even with *insidiousness*, a term which no intelligent reader needs to be told, implies *dishonesty*. I regret that such language has found its way into this controversy. I am not able to see that it aids the argument of those who employ it ; and it certainly contributes nothing to the charity of christian intercourse. You will not imagine, I am sure, that this language is capable of exciting in me a feeling of personal resentment or pain. But it is exceedingly to be lamented, that gentlemen of their station should indulge in a style so scrupulously banished from all dignified and polished society ; that a person so long employed as one of them has been, in forming the *moral* principles and character of youth, should discover so little success in the discipline of his own temper ; and that they have not all more highly appreciated the duty of being *examples to the*

*flock*. It shall be my aim, in the following pages, to avoid all similar language. And if you should ever find me inadvertently betrayed into it, be assured it is contrary to my fixed resolution; and that, when discovered, it will be a source of unfeigned regret. May we all remember, with the celebrated author of the *ecclesiastical polity*, that “there will come a time when three words uttered “with charity and meekness shall receive a far more blessed “reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful “sharpness of wit!”

But these gentlemen not only employ, on their part, what I must consider as exceptionable language; they also impute to me language scarcely less offensive or exceptionable than their own. Dr. *Bowden* says that I pronounce episcopacy an *antichristian usurpation*. Vol. I. p. 245. And Mr. *How* asserts, that I “brand prelacy as *the detested offspring of ecclesiastical fraud and tyranny*.” I can only say that no such expressions are to be found in my book; and that whatever there is in them which bears an opprobrious or indelicate character, is to be ascribed, not to me, but to the invention of my accusers.

I shall not attempt to follow these gentlemen through all their minute and tedious details. For this drudgery I have neither leisure nor inclination. It would be again to travel over the whole ground which I have already endeavoured to explore, and to exhibit in a just light; and which, after carefully attending to all that they have said, still appears to me to rest on immovable foundations. After requesting you to peruse my former letters a second time with care, and to compare them impartially with what my opponents have advanced, the cause is cheerfully committed to your decision. All that I propose, at present, is to review some of the most plausible reasonings of these zealous and confident polemics; to point out a few of their more gross and palpable mistakes; and to show the candid reader how far he can rely on the statements of persons who discover so little acquaintance with more than one side of the controversy; and at the same time allow themselves to speak as if they engrossed all knowledge, and as if wisdom would die with them.

These letters, my brethren, as well as the former series are intended solely for your use. They are occasioned, indeed, by the strictures of the gentlemen whose names are mentioned in the title

page ; but I have not thought proper to address those gentlemen directly. With them I have no personal dispute. Though they have intruded into our Church for the purpose of attacking me in the peaceable discharge of my pastoral duties, I have still no disposition to do more than to act on the defensive. But to refute their cavils, to repel their unfounded and injurious charges, to lay open the weakness of their cause, and to expose their want of information on this subject, is a duty which I owe to you. This duty I will attempt to discharge ; and in the execution of it, I hope you will follow me patiently.



## LETTER II.

COMPARATIVE STRESS LAID ON ECCLESIASTICAL ORDER BY PRESBYTERIANS AND HIGH-CHURCHMEN.—THE DOCTRINE OF THE JURE-DIVINO PRESBYTERIANS BRIEFLY STATED.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

Two of the gentlemen whose attacks I am called upon to repel, accuse me of misrepresenting the high-toned episcopal doctrine which they avow, and endeavour to maintain. They impute to me a desire to excite prejudices against them, by insinuating, that they exclude all but Episcopalians from *salvation*. Mr. *How*, in particular, brings forward and urges this accusation with great zeal. I utterly deny the charge. I never intended to convey such an insinuation ; and am persuaded that my letters do not contain a single sentence which can be fairly construed as expressing it.

But I *have* asserted, that *such* Episcopalians as agree with these writers, exclude us from the *covenanted* mercy of God, and declare us to be destitute of all interest in the *promises* of salvation. I *have* asserted, that they pronounce us to be out of the church of Christ, and aliens from the covenant of grace. I *have* asserted, that, while they express a charitable hope that such of us as depart from the episcopal church from “ involuntary ignorance or error,” will find mercy ; they uniformly consider and represent this mercy as extended to Presbyterians, in the same manner, and on the same principles, as to the *heathen* ; that is, not in virtue of any *covenant engagement*, or *explicit promise* ; but on the footing of general, unpledged mercy. I have said *this*, and this *only*, and all this, they have themselves, in effect, avowed, repeated, and gloried in, with a zeal worthy of a better cause.

But these gentlemen insist, that however high and offensive *their* claims may be considered, *we*, on our part, advance claims as high and as offensive as theirs ; and, therefore, on our own principles, have no right to complain. They urge this argument with much confidence, and seem to regard it as a triumphant answer to the charge of unscriptural assumption. Mr. *How* expresses himself thus : “ Episcopalians lay no more stress on external order “ than does the society to which you belong. Who could have “ supposed it possible, after seeing you through several pages, “ declaiming against the monstrous pretensions of your opponents, “ that they carry external order precisely as far as your own “ *confession of faith*, and not a tittle further.” p. 16. Again he says, “ You inveigh bitterly against your episcopal neighbours, “ for asserting the exclusive validity of episcopal ordination. But “ you equally assert the exclusive validity of presbyterial ordina- “ tion ; telling us, that, without such ordination, there can be no “ ministry ; without a ministry, no church ; and without a church, “ no covenanted title to salvation. In addition to all this, you “ assert the divine institution of presbyterial government, in all its “ parts, excluding its habitual violators, cases of unavoidable igno- “ rance or involuntary error excepted, from the kingdom of “ heaven. If the episcopal doctrine is of a nature *nearly* allied to “ the claim of papal infallibility, your doctrine must be the claim “ of papal infallibility itself.” p. 117. Nay, he asserts, that Presbyterians carry their ideas of the importance of external order *much further* than Episcopalians. p. 22, 23. “ I proceed to “ observe that Presbyterians go much further than Episcopalians “ in their ideas of external order. Thus, not contented with “ making presbyterial ordination essential to the existence of the “ church, and to all covenanted title to salvation they tell us that “ presbyterial government is, in all its parts, sketched out in “ scripture ; that it is the duty of all Christians to conform to it ; “ and that, in refusing or neglecting to do so, they incur great “ guilt. The plan of ruling elders and deacons, with mere “ temporal functions ; the whole system of church sessions, “ presbyterial assemblies, synodical assemblies, and general assem- “ blies, they say, is prescribed in the word of God. In fact, it is “ impossible to carry external order further than these men carry “ it. See the language which they hold ! Presbyterial govern-

“ment, in church sessions, presbyterial assemblies, synodical  
 “assemblies, and general assemblies, is established by the apostles,  
 “and is the law of God’s house. All are bound to conform to it.  
 “Habitual disobedience to any of the divine commands will exclude  
 “from the kingdom of heaven. Thus all but Presbyterians are  
 “consigned to perdition. And what relief do they give? Why,  
 “simply, that there are sins of ignorance and infirmity which may  
 “consist with a gracious state. So that our opponents not only  
 “make presbyterial ordination essential to the existence of the  
 “church, but they represent obedience to their particular mode of  
 “ecclesiastical government as a condition of salvation: placing  
 “all who reject it on the ground of the general mercy which, it is  
 “hoped, God will extend to persons labouring under unavoidable,  
 “or involuntary, error. And is not this, sir, the *exact ground on*  
 “*which those who depart from the episcopal constitution of the*  
 “*priesthood are placed by the very men against whom you so*  
 “*bitterly inveigh?*” This is such a favourite topic of declamation with Mr. *How*, that he can scarcely get through a single page, without directly or indirectly recurring to it. His coadjutors seem to be never better pleased than when joining in the same strain. And truly it wants nothing to render it a very plausible argument, but the single circumstance of having *some foundation in fact*. Of this, I am compelled to say, it is *totally destitute*.

To show that Mr. *How*, in writing thus, unjustly accuses our church, nothing more is necessary than to transcribe the following chapters from our *Confession of Faith*, and *Form of Government*. They are given *entire*, that there may be no suspicion of concealment or mutilation; that the several sections of each chapter may explain one another; and, I will add, that Mr. *How*, if he should ever happen to look into these pages, may have an opportunity of reading them, which, after perusing such remarks as are quoted above, I cannot suppose he has ever yet done.

#### CONFESSION OF FAITH.—CHAP. XXV. OF THE CHURCH.

“I. The catholic or universal church, which is *invisible*, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

“ II. The *visible* church which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation as before, under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion, together with their children ; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

“ III. Unto this catholic visible church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world : and doth by his own presence and spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.

“ IV. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.

“ V. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error : and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless there shall be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will.

“ VI. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense be head thereof ; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself, in the church, against Christ, and all that is called God.”

FORM OF GOVERNMENT.—CHAP. I. OF THE CHURCH.

“ I. Jesus Christ, who is now exalted, far above all principality, and power, hath erected, in this world, a kingdom, which is his church.

“ II. The universal church consists of all those persons, in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ, and of submission to his laws.

“ III. As this immense multitude cannot meet together, in one place, to hold communion, or to worship God, it is reasonable and warranted by scripture example, that they should be divided into many particular churches.

“ IV. A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated together, for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the holy scriptures; and submitting to a certain form of government.”

FORM OF GOVERNMENT.—CHAP. II. OF THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.

“ I. Our blessed Lord, at first, collected his church out of different nations, and formed it into one body, by the mission of men endued with miraculous gifts, which have long since ceased.

“ II. The ordinary and perpetual officers, in the church, are *bishops* or *pastors*; the representatives of the people, usually styled *ruling elders*, and *deacons*.”

FORM OF GOVERNMENT.—CHAP. VII. OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT, AND THE SEVERAL KINDS OF JUDICATORIES.

“ I. It is absolutely necessary that the government of the church be exercised under some certain and definite form: and we hold it to be expedient, and agreeable to scripture and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the church be governed by congregational, presbyterial, and synodical assemblies. In full consistency with this belief, *we embrace, in the spirit of charity, those Christians who differ from us, in opinion or in practice, on these subjects.*

“ II. These assemblies ought not to possess any civil jurisdiction nor to inflict any civil penalties: Their power is wholly moral or spiritual, and that only ministerial and declarative. They possess the right of requiring obedience to the laws of Christ; and of excluding the disobedient and disorderly, from the privileges of the church. To give efficiency, however, to this necessary and scriptural authority, they possess the powers requisite for obtaining evidence and inflicting censure; they can call before them any offender against the order and government of the church: They can require members, of their own society, to appear and give testimony on the cause; but the highest punishment to which their authority extends is to exclude the contumacious and impenitent from the congregation of believers.”

In these chapters, every line is marked with wisdom, moderation, and charity. They are so far from asserting that no church is enti-

tled to the name of a church of Christ, but *our own*, that the *contrary* is clearly and unequivocally acknowledged. They are so far from maintaining, that there is no salvation out of the pale of our church, that they could scarcely have found words more strongly to express an opposite opinion, without running into unlimited latitudinarianism. They make the visible church to consist of *all those throughout the world, who profess the true religion*, together with their children; and, lest the phrase, *the true religion*, might be construed to mean an *exact conformity with our own standards*, they declare that they consider as included in the visible catholic church, many churches *less pure than their own*, and that they freely “embrace in the spirit of charity, those Christians who differ “from them, in *opinion*, or in *practice*, on these subjects.” They go on to state, that this visible church is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no *ordinary* possibility of salvation; thus making express provision for the, exercise of mercy in ways *extraordinary*, and therefore *unknown* to us. Could any thing be more guarded or remote from bigotry? These gentlemen, however, insist, that in the chapter of the *Confession of Faith*, (Chap. 27.) which treats of the *sacraments*, it is formally declared, that “neither of the sacraments may “be dispensed by any other than a minister of the word *lawfully* “*ordained*.” But what is this to the purpose? Who is a “minister of the word lawfully ordained?” If any preceding or subsequent passage in our public standards, had asserted, or even intimated, that no minister is lawfully ordained, but one who has been set apart *exactly in our mode*, there would be some pretext for this cavil. But no such assertion or intimation, nor any thing that resembles either, is contained in the whole book. It prescribes the course of study, and the kind of trials which candidates for the ministry, in our church, shall be required to pass through, and it also directs the mode of their ordination: but it pronounces no sentence of invalidity on *other modes* of conducting these important concerns; nor does it give a hint, from which, by fair reasoning, such a sentence can be deduced.

But this is not all. While the *language* of our *confession of faith* and *articles of government*, is catholic and charitable in a very remarkable degree, their *history* illustrates and confirms their language. They were drawn up by the *Westminster Assembly*



of *Divines*, than which a more venerable body of ministers never convened. This illustrious ecclesiastical council consisted of more than a hundred divines, besides the lay members. And it is remarkable, that *all* of these divines, excepting about *seven* or *eight*, had received *episcopal* ordination and *no other*. Is it credible that these men, assembled as ministers, judicially deliberating and acting as ministers, could have intended to pronounce their own ordination null and void? Or that they would frame articles declaring all such ordinations in future invalid? No; such a sentence was never pronounced; and I may confidently assert, was never thought of by a member of that assembly. While they declared the Presbyterian form of church government to be the apostolic and primitive plan; they explicitly acknowledged the validity of episcopal orders and ministrations. And the same has been the language and the conduct of every Presbyterian church that ever existed on earth.

Ministers *episcopally* ordained have frequently applied to be received into Christian and ministerial communion with Presbyterian churches, both in *Europe* and *America*. But did Mr. *How* ever hear of one of them being *re-ordained*? I will venture to say he never did. Ministers have offered themselves to the church to which I have the honour to belong, not only from the *episcopal*, but also from the *Methodist* and the *Baptist* churches. But was a *re-ordination* ever attempted, in *any one* of these cases? I can confidently affirm that no such case ever occurred; certainly none ever came to my knowledge. In every instance in which it was ascertained that the minister applying to be received, had been regularly set apart to the sacred office, by the imposition of the hands of men authorized to preach and administer sacraments in their own church, he was freely received, and his ordination sustained as valid. Does this look like pronouncing our precise form of church order *indispensable* to a regular ministry, to valid ordinances, or to final salvation? Had we been accused of being zealous advocates for the doctrine of *purgatory* or *transubstantiation*, the charge would have been equally true, and equally creditable to the candour of its author.

But perhaps Mr. *How* will plead, that, although *our* church, in the language of her public standards, is, on the whole, liberal and conciliatory; yet that other branches of the Presbyterian body,

particularly those with which Dr. *Mason*, and Mr. *M'Leod* are connected, go the whole length of asserting the exclusive validity of the Presbyterian ministry and ordinances. Such is one of the arts to which this gentleman resorts, when he cannot find materials enough in our *confession of faith*, to satisfy his insatiable appetite for proscription and excommunication. But neither will this subterfuge avail him. He accuses *others* as unjustly as he accuses *us*. It is not true that the most high-toned Presbyterians on earth, go any thing like the length, in maintaining the necessity of our particular mode of constituting the christian ministry, that this gentleman and his friends do in asserting the exclusive validity of episcopal ordination. And, although both Dr. *Mason* and Mr. *M'Leod* may hold some opinions concerning the Christian church in which I do not entirely concur with them; yet there cannot be greater injustice than to speak of them and their writings in the manner in which Mr. *How* has permitted himself to do. To what this misstatement of their opinions is to be ascribed, it becomes not me to say. I dare not impeach the integrity of Mr. *How*. For acquitting his honesty at the expense of his understanding, he would not thank me: And to suppose that he has allowed himself to speak with so much positiveness of their tenets, without any acquaintance with them, would be as offensive as either.

But are there not some Presbyterians who hold that their form of church government was the apostolic and primitive form? Undoubtedly, many. And are there not some also, who go further, and insist that this form is binding on the church, under all circumstances and states of society, and, of course, ought to be adopted in all ages? There are certainly some who go even this length. Well! my opponents will reply, is not this holding to the *divine right* of Presbyterian government? It is. And is it not, of consequence, going the whole length with us, and denying that there can be any true church, or valid ordinances without it? Certainly not. The conclusion has no more connexion with the premises, than with the most remote object in creation.

As both Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* have evidently yet to learn the sentiments of the *jure divino* Presbyterians, and as, for want of information on this point, they are groping in the dark, whenever they approach it; I will endeavour to enlighten this part of their path, and, if possible, prevent, in future, those perpetual

wanderings, which are really much more calculated to excite the ridicule, or the commiseration, than the resentment of their Presbyterian readers.

The advocates, then, for the *divine right* of presbytery, (I now speak of the most rigid class of them,) believe that, in the apostolic church every regularly organized congregation of Christians was furnished with three classes of church officers, with a bishop, (or pastor,) ruling elders, and deacons; that the bench of elders, with the bishop as their standing moderator or president, constituted the spiritual court, for directing all affairs purely ecclesiastical in the congregation; that the bishops of a number of neighbouring congregations, were in the habit of statedly meeting together, not only to cherish a spirit of union and fraternal affection, but also to deliberate on matters of more general concern, than those of a particular church; that in these larger assemblies or presbyteries, (or by whatever name they were called,) a delegation from the eldership of each church attended with their bishop; and that, either statedly or occasionally, (it matters not which, as to the principle,) the bishops and elders of much larger districts, convened under the title of *synods* or *councils*, for the purpose of discussing and deciding great questions, and of making general arrangements. This, they suppose, was the form of government which the apostles, acting under the inspiration of God, established in the primitive church. They believe, moreover, that as this form of ecclesiastical polity was adopted by inspired men, it is the best form; that it was intended to be perpetual; that it is the duty of churches, in all ages, and in all states of society, to adopt it; and that in proportion as any deviate from it, they deviate from the simplicity and purity of the apostolic age, and contravene the will of God.

But, while this class of Presbyterians zealously maintain the principles which have been stated, they, at the same time, explicitly grant, that there may be *deviations* from this apostolic form of government, without *destroying*, or, in any essential degree, *impairing*, the character of a Christian church. They suppose that imperfection attends every thing human. That although every church, as well as every man, is *required* to be in *all respects* perfectly conformed to the divine will; yet that neither *any church*, nor *any man* is, *in fact*, thus perfect. They suppose that, among individual professors of religion, there may be all manner of

variety as to the degrees of exemplariness which they manifest ; and yet that they may all be entitled, in the judgment of charity, to be considered as *visible Christians* ; and further, that cases may arise, in which it would be difficult to decide whether a mans deviations had proceeded so far, as that he ought, on the whole, to be excluded from this class or not. In like manner, the Presbyterians of whom we are speaking, admit that there are churches which differ considerably as to the degrees of purity which they have preserved, but which, notwithstanding, are all entitled to the character of *visible churches* of Christ. They suppose, indeed, that all deviations from primitive simplicity, whether in doctrine, in worship, or in government, are *blamable* and *ought* to be *corrected* ; but still, that such may exist, in a certain degree, without excluding those who are guilty of them from the class of *churches*. And in what actual cases these deviations have become so numerous and important as to render them no longer churches of Christ, but *Synagogues of Satan*, they have seldom undertaken to pronounce.

The most rigid Presbyterians have, at different times, both as individuals and judicatories ; both by their writings, and their decisions, explicitly acknowledged different denominations of Christians to be true churches of Christ. They have acknowledged our *Congregational* brethren in *New England* ; the regular *Independents* in various parts of *Great Britain* ; the *Episcopalians* in *England* and *America* ; the *Lutherans* in *Germany* and the *United States* ; and the *Methodist* and *Baptist* denominations, as all churches of Christ. They consider all these, indeed, as more or less corrupt ; and have, accordingly, at different times, and without reserve, written, preached, and printed their testimony against those corruptions ; but still they have never said of any of them, that they had no church, no ministry, no valid ordinances, but acknowledged the contrary without hesitation or scruple.

In short, the high-toned Presbyterians, of whom we are speaking do not carry the divine right of *church government* further than they carry the divine right of *doctrine* and *worship* in the church. Nay, it may be asserted, that, without a single exception, they have always laid *more stress* on the *two latter* than on the *first*, as entering more immediately than that into the vital interests and character of the church. Now, it is well known, that this class of Presbyterians, as well as all others, freely admit that there may be

departures from absolute purity, both in doctrine and worship, without *unchurching* those who admit them. They believe, for instance, that *Arminianism* is a doctrinal corruption; but yet they would shudder to pronounce that those churches which receive it, have no valid ministry or ordinances, or to deny that any of their members may be saved. They are persuaded, that in the primitive church there were no *forms of prayer* used in public worship; and that the introduction of them is unwarranted and inexpedient; yet I never heard of any one who considered this as so essential an innovation, as either to doubt the piety of those who used forms, or even to pronounce it absolutely *unlawful* to unite in worship conducted by a *liturgy*. They know that *kneeling* at the *Lord's supper*, and the doctrine of *transubstantitation* came into the church together, and have no doubt that together they ought to have been discarded; yet they do not imagine, that this mode of receiving is inconsistent with pious and acceptable communicating; much less that it vitiates the sacrament; and least of all, that it infers a belief in the grand popish error with which it was originally connected. I have known Episcopalians to receive the sacred bread and wine, *kneeling*, from the hands of a Presbyterian minister, when all the rest of the communicants were *sitting*; and have no reason to suppose that any other Presbyterian minister would have scrupled to comply with a similar application.

It is to no purpose to say, "that if these be the opinions of *jure divino* Presbyterians, they are inconsistent with themselves; for that a belief that Presbyterianism was the apostolic form of church government, necessarily carries with it, on every principle of sober reasoning, a belief that there can be no church, no ministry without it." This conclusion is as illegitimate in reasoning, as it is false in fact. The Presbyterians of whom we are speaking, utterly disavow this doctrine which is, by inference, imputed to them; and declare, that, as it is not deducible from their principles, so it makes no part of their creed.

The warmest advocates of the divine right of prelacy admit that a church may depart in many respects, from the primitive model, without forfeiting the title of a church of Christ? They consider the church of *Rome* as a true church of Christ, though a *degenerate* and *corrupt* one. In one of the *Homilies* of the church of *England*, drawn up by archbishop *Cranmer*, and the

other reformers, it is expressly declared, that that church is not only “*idolatrous and unchristian*; not only an *harlot*, as the “scripture calleth her, but also a *foul, filthy, old withered harlot*; “the *foulest and filthiest harlot*, that ever was seen.”\* I do not contend for the *decency* of these epithets. That is no concern of mine. I state the real language of the church of *England*, as deliberately expressed in her standards. And yet, while high-churchmen solemnly declare their belief in the doctrine of these *Homilies*, they acknowledge the church of *Rome* to be a church of Christ; trace their *line of succession* through her; and uniformly acknowledge her ministry and ordinances to be valid. In fact, it is on the principle that it is *lawful* to depart from the exact pattern of the primitive church, with respect to rites, ceremonies, and discipline, that the church of *England* vindicates many things in her own system, which she acknowledges were neither enjoined nor practised in the days of the apostles. Nay, many of her sons, and especially those who advocate the doctrine of my opponents, do not scruple to affirm, that the whole system of ecclesiastical government and discipline is mutable,† and may be lawfully modified according to human wisdom, excepting the single part, so dearly beloved, which respects the *three orders of clergy*. Every thing else, in the external organization, they suppose may be altered, without affecting the essence of the church; but to touch this part of the body, they consider as the invasion of its vital organ.

Thus it appears, that the highest-toned *jure divino* Presbyterians do not lay any thing like the stress on their form of church government, that Dr. *Bowden*, Mr. *How*, and other *jure divino* prelatists do on the point of *Episcopacy*; that the charge brought against them that they unchurch all who reject the Presbyterian government, is perfectly unfounded; not deducible from any of their principles, and totally disavowed by them; that their public standards, their judicial decisions, and their most esteemed writers, all with one voice, acknowledge that there are true churches, a regular ministry, and valid ordinances, where Presbyterianism is wanting; and, of course, that the allegations of Dr. *Bowden*, and

\* Homily against peril of idolatry. Part III. page 216. Edit. Oxford, 1802.

† See Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, passim.



Mr. *How*, are not only unsupported by evidence, but brought forward directly in the face of all legitimate evidence. When these gentlemen, or either of them, shall produce a single volume or document, sanctioned by any Presbyterian church, or from the pen of any esteemed Presbyterian divine, which contradicts my statement, I shall then, and not till then, acquit them of calumniating our venerable church.

But these gentlemen will, perhaps, ask, "Do we not find in the writings of many Presbyterian divines, *severe epithets*, expressive of strong *disapprobation*, applied to the episcopal hierarchy? Have we not actually pointed out some instances of this kind?" Granted. And what then? May I not see an egregious fault in an acquaintance, and reprove him sharply for it, without deeming it so great as to expunge his name from the list of my friends, or to pronounce him a bad man? May we not consider and oppose as an error, that which we do not believe, at the same time, will destroy the character of a church? I am sure that no offensive language directed against Episcopalians, is to be found in the *Confession of Faith* of our church, and very seldom in our best writers. But if it were otherwise, where shall we find language, to be compared on the score either of *indelicacy* or *severity*, with that which the church of *England* has formally directed against the church of *Rome*,\* while at the same time she acknowledged, and does still acknowledge, her ministry and ordinances to be valid.

Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* make much use of the society of *Quakers* in this controversy. They ask me, whether, amidst all my professions of liberality, I can consistently with our *Confession of Faith*, acknowledge the *Quakers* as a visible church of Christ? And if not, how I can find fault with *Episcopalians* for not acknowledging *us*? My only reply to all their declamation on this subject shall be short. It is not a *practical* question. The society of *Quakers* do not profess to have an ordained ministry, at all, in the sense of most other denominations of Protestants. The question, then, whether we can acknowledge their ordinations, ministry, and sacraments to be valid, can never come before us; for none of these things make any part of their ecclesiastical system; and, of course, can never be offered to us to receive our sanction. I consider, therefore, all that my opponents have said on this subject, as a

\* See page 252.

vain effort to obscure the merits of the real question, and as inconclusive as it is irrelevant to the controversy.

Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* speak much of “*covenanted*” and “*uncovenanted*” mercy. The latter candidly and repeatedly avows his belief, that all who are in communion with a church organized in the episcopal form, are *in covenant* with God; and that *all others*, without exception, are *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, *strangers to the covenant of promise*, and have no hope but in the general *uncovenanted* mercy of God. We certainly can have no objection to his informing us what is *his* creed, and we thank him for being so unreservedly communicative on the subject. But he goes further. He undertakes to say that Presbyterians, on their part, hold a similar opinion; that they exclude from the christian covenant all but *Presbyterians*; nay, that they pronounce all who do not embrace “the rigid peculiarities of *Calvinism*,” to be in an unregenerate state, and coolly consign them to “*uncovenanted* mercy.” Had Mr. *How* asserted that all Presbyterians are zealous advocates of the divine mission of *Mahomet*, it would have been, rather more ridiculous indeed, but not a whit more remote from fact than this statement. His position is not only not true, but there is not a shadow of foundation for it; nor can he produce a single Presbyterian writer, of respectable character, who says any thing that can be reasonably construed as bearing the least resemblance to this doctrine.\*

Presbyterians, (I speak now of *all* that I have ever known or heard of, particularly the most rigid among them,) Presbyterians, I say, believe, that according to the tenor of the *covenant of grace*, salvation is *promised*, that is, secured by *covenant engagement*, to all who sincerely repent of sin, and unfeignedly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course they consider all who bear this character, to *whatever* external church they may belong, or even if they bear no relation to *any* visible church, as *in covenant* with God, as

\* It is to be hoped that Presbyterians understand the gospel too well to speak of “*uncovenanted* mercy” at all. The phrase itself is unscriptural; and if it convey any meaning, it is an erroneous one. Fallen creatures know of no mercy but that which is *promised* or secured by the *covenant of grace*, in Christ Jesus our Lord. If Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* have discovered any other *kind* or *channel* of divine mercy, I can only say, they have not found it in the Bible.

interested in his *great and precious promises*, and as in the sure and certain road to his heavenly kingdom. They know, indeed, and teach, that it is the *duty* of all who believe in Christ, to connect themselves with his visible church ; they teach also, that receiving the *seals* of God's covenant, and attending on all the ordinances of his house, are solemnly enjoined, and productive of essential advantages. Nay, they go so far as to pronounce that he who neglects these ordinances, when he is favoured with an opportunity of attending on them, gives, in ordinary cases, too much reason to fear, whatever may be his declarations to the contrary, that he has no real love to Christ. But still they do not, and without contradicting the Scriptures, they cannot, teach that the *means* of religion constitute its *essence*, or that the *seals* of the covenant, *form the covenant itself*. The seal on a bond, is not itself *the contract*, but only the *evidence* of it. In like manner, the seals of the christian covenant, are not in themselves the *promise* or the *engagement* either on the part of God or man ; but are the constituted means of *recognizing* or *ratifying* a covenant transaction, supposed to have previously taken place in secret, when the person receiving the seal, embraced the gospel, and cordially devoted himself to Christ on the terms of the covenant.

I repeat it, then, the doctrine of all Calvinistic Presbyterians is, that every one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and maintains a holy life, whatever may be the mistakes into which he may fall, or the prejudices against particular parts of evangelical truth and order which he may entertain ; whatever the disadvantages under which he may labour, with respect to his ecclesiastical connexions ; or even if he were placed in circumstances in which he never saw a place of public worship, a minister of the gospel, or a church officer of any kind, in his life ; that every such person is *in covenant* with God, and has that *title* to salvation which is given by the *promise* of a faithful God to every sincere believer. How *much* error, how *much* infirmity, how *much* deviation from the external order which God hath appointed in his house, is consistent with true faith, we know not, nor has any Presbyterian, with whose person or writings I am acquainted, ever attempted to decide. But that every one who *has* sincere faith in Christ, is in covenant with God, they, with one voice, proclaim and teach.

This simple statement also refutes another assertion, which Mr.

*How* permits himself, without the smallest foundation, to make and repeat. The assertion to which I allude, is conveyed in the following terms. "All of you declare baptism and the supper to be *general conditions of salvation*; representing them as seals of the covenant of grace, without which, it is impossible to have any ordinary or regular claim to the blessings of that covenant. Such as habitually neglect these ordinances, saving a little allowance for error, you exclude from the kingdom of heaven.—Intolerant and bigoted wretches! To give so much importance to the ceremony of sprinkling water, or of receiving bread and wine! And to tell us too, that it is impossible to have these ordinances, except at the hands of ministers *presbyterially* ordained. How much better is all this than the tale of papal infallibility! How far are you removed from catholic absurdity and arrogance!" *Letters*, p. 117. Mr. *How* asserts that *all* Presbyterians believe and speak thus. But can he find *one* that does? I know of none; and am confident there is none. Our *Confession of Faith* says no such thing. On the contrary, it expressly declares, that persons to whom these ordinances are *never* administered, *may be saved*; and that those who *do* receive them *may perish*. "But," says Mr. *How*, "your *Confession of Faith* represents baptism as the only mode of admission into the visible church; it declares that out of the visible church, there is no *ordinary* possibility of salvation; and it maintains that baptism ought not to be administered by any but a minister of the gospel *lawfully* ordained. Does it not follow then, that without baptism, there is 'no ordinary possibility of salvation?' No, it does not follow. His premises are incorrect, and his conclusion is equally so. With all his confidence, he blunders at every step. Every one who has read our *Confession of Faith*, knows its doctrine on this subject to be, that *all who profess the true religion*, are members of the visible church; that the *children* of such persons, by virtue of their *birth*, and of course *anterior to baptism*, are also members of the church; and that baptism is only the appointed *seal*, or solemn *recognition*, and *ratification* of their membership. This is perfectly plain; and it cuts up by the roots every pretence for the statement which Mr. *How* has made.

With respect to Mr. *How's* direct and repeated assertion, that Calvinistic Presbyterians make a belief in the doctrine of "election,"

and the other, “rigid peculiarities of *Calvinism*,” essential to our being in covenant with God, and that they represent all who do not receive these “peculiarities” as given up to uncovenanted mercy, it is difficult to answer it as it deserves, without speaking of its author in a manner in which I cannot permit myself to speak of a Christian minister. It is no arrogance to say that I am probably as familiar with the writings of Calvinistic divines as Mr. *How* : and I can solemnly declare, that to the best of my recollection, I never met with one who expressed such a sentiment, or who gave the least reason to suppose that he held it : nor do I believe that Mr. *How* ever saw or heard of one. On the contrary, I have scarcely ever opened a volume by the most zealous *Calvinist*, in which a question of this kind was discussed, without finding an acknowledgment, either express or implied, of the *sincere piety*, and of course the *covenant title to heaven*, of many who were far from being Calvinists. But you will find, my brethren, before you have completed the perusal of these sheets, some apology for Mr. *How*. You will clearly perceive that he is not acquainted with the writings of *Calvin*, and that he does not *understand* the system of doctrines which is distinguished by the name of that great reformer.

Mr. *How*, in his zeal to prove that Presbyterians are even more uncharitable than such highchurch-men as himself and others, endeavours to throw great odium on a clause in the 10th chapter of our *Confession of Faith*, which is in the following words : “Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved, *in any other way whatsoever*, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion which they do profess ; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.” All that these words are intended to assert, is, that none of our fallen race can be saved *in any other way than through Christ*. The slightest perusal is sufficient to ascertain that this their real meaning. But, even if the language of the clause itself had left this point doubtful, all doubt would be removed by attending to another clause in the same chapter, and only five lines distant from that which we are considering, which expressly recognizes the possibility of some being saved, who have never had an opportunity of hearing the gospel preached. The doctrine, then, of the passage alluded to

by Mr. *How*, is simply this, that it is *false* and *pernicious* to teach that men may be saved *in any other way*, than through the atoning sacrifice, and sanctifying spirit of Christ. A position in which one would imagine all professing Christians, except *Socinians* and *Universalists*, must, without hesitation, concur. But Mr. *How* exceedingly dislikes it, and is determined to hold it up to detestation and abhorrence, as asserting that none who have not been favoured with the preaching of the gospel can possibly be saved; and as consigning the whole heathen world to inevitable perdition. By what management does he attempt to do this? By faithfully transcribing the clause, and laying it before his readers in a fair and unmutilated form? Not at all. Had he done this, his purpose would have been defeated. Every reader would instantly have recognized in the language of our *Confession of Faith*, a perfect coincidence with that of the scriptures.\* But by a contrivance, which, it will hereafter be seen, is not unusual with this gentleman, he first essentially alters the passage, and then presents it, regularly marked with inverted commas, as if it were the real language of the article. What that language in *fact* is, you have already seen. Mr. *How* declares that it is as follows. "They who having " never heard the gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not " in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their " lives according to the light of nature." *Letters*, p. 25. Having thus taken out of the passage an important clause which it *does* contain, and added to it what it does *not* contain, he holds it up to his readers as consigning to inevitable perdition, the whole heathen world. And assuming this as the acknowledged construction, he vehemently declaims against it as " uncharitable," " cruel," a " position of deep-toned horror," and calculated to " fill the rational mind with dismay."

But the most wonderful part of the story is yet to be told. It is a fact, that one of the *thirty-nine articles* of Mr. *How's* own church, contains precisely the same declaration that he, with so much violence, condemns in our *Confession of Faith*. The article referred to, is the *eighteenth*, which is in the following words. " They also are to be had accursed, that presume to say, that every " man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so

\* See particularly *Acts* 4. 12. *John* 14. 6. *John* 17. 3. *Gal.* 1. 6, 7, 8.



“that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature. For holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.” The only difference worthy of attention, is, that the Presbyterian Confession of Faith pronounces the *doctrine*, that men may be saved otherwise than by Christ, “*pernicious*” and to be “*detested*.” Whereas, the episcopal article, more harshly, declares, that the *persons* who hold it, are to be *had accursed*. This article Mr. How has solemnly subscribed, and the doctrine contained in it, he has canonically sworn to preach and support. And yet he declares “he has no power to express the feelings with which this *most detestable doctrine* fills his bosom.” To what can we ascribe this conduct? I am unable to think of it without the deepest astonishment and horror!\*

In a note, in a former edition of this work, to p. 17, of my *introductory* letter, I expressed myself in the following terms. “Several distinguished writers in Great Britain, who have lately espoused with much warmth, the exclusive episcopal notions under consideration, do not scruple to assert, that *all* who ‘are in communion with the episcopal church are in communion with Christ,’ and in the ‘sure road to salvation.’ They deny that there is any *pledged* or *covenanted* mercy; in other words, that there are any *promises* given in the gospel to persons who are not in communion with that church, however, sincere their faith and repentance, and however ardent their piety. And, accordingly, they turn into ridicule every attempt to distinguish between a *professing* Episcopalian, and a *real* Christian.” With this passage Mr. How is much offended. He not only rebukes me with great severity for penning a paragraph so “calculated to deceive and inflame my readers; but he goes further, and declares that the sentiment which I ascribe to the writers in question, is not held by them; and that I “ought to know, and cannot but know,” that they do not hold it. Thus charging me in pretty direct terms with writing a known and deliberate falsehood.—p. 14, 15.

\* The passage which Mr. How refers to the *Confession of Faith* is really to be found in the *larger catechism*, in the answer to the 60th question. As it contains, however, nothing essentially different from the article quoted either from the *Confession of Faith*, or from the 18th article of the episcopal church, no further remark seems necessary.

As I had mentioned no *names*, and as Mr. *How*, of course, could not certainly know to what particular writers I alluded, it is somewhat singular that he should venture a contradiction with so much confidence and indecorum. But as neither delicacy nor caution enter into the plan of controversy which this gentleman has adopted, I no longer wonder at any extremes of his rashness or violence. The truth is, that in the paragraph above stated, I have not only not *intentionally* misrepresented any one, but am also still persuaded that I fell into no *real* error. But, however this may be, all that I said, was advanced on the authority of a respectable divine of the church of *England*, now living, who expresses himself in the following words. “Mr. *Daubeny*, in like manner, sees no difference between the true church of Christ, and the national church; “represents *professed* membership with this national society as “forming the line of distinction between the world which lieth in “wickedness and a state of condemnation before God, and those “who are in a state of sanctification and salvation; and speaks “indiscriminately of all who have been regularly baptized, and “remain in the established communion, as “members of Christ’s “body,” “partakers of Christ’s spirit,” the “peculiar property of “Christ,” and as having “a peculiar interest in him :” in other “words, as “translated from the world,” delivered from the “powers of darkness,” and heirs with Christ of an eternal kingdom.” *Guide to the Church*, p. 15, 16. 171, 172. 234, and “*passim*. “Every Christian,” that is, every *professed* Christian, “he says again, after being called to reconsider the subject, who “is “living in a state of communion with the church,” namely, “with that “visible society” of Christians, where the episcopal “form of government is to be found, *is in the sure road to salvation.*” *Appendix, Letter 7*, 452. *Antijacobin Review*, Feb. “1800, p. 145. The distinction between the national establishment, and the true church of Christ, Mr. *Daubeny* teaches, is “unnecessary,” and a “false distinction.” “That,” he says, “may be a true church in which the pure word of God is *not* “preached.” *Appendix*, p. 252, 475, 476. Mr. *Polwhele* considers it among the *greatest extravagancies*, to think unfavourably of the state of many, “who every Lord’s day attend the “the service of the church. *Letter to Dr. Hawker*, p. 38. Dr. “*Paley*, Dr. *Croft*, and their admirers, teach that the scripture

"titles of "elect," "called," "saints," being in Christ," &c. "were intended in a sense common to *all* Christian converts," and "that," "the application of such titles to distinguish individuals "amongst us, the professors of Christianity, from one another," "argues the greatest ignorance and presumption. Dr. *Paley's*, "*Visitation Serm. at Carlisle*, 1777, p. 11, 12. Dr. *Croft's* "preface to his *Thoughts*, &c. and Mr. *Clapham's* Sermon. In "further conformity to this doctrine, the scripture terms and "phrases, "conversion," "regeneration," the becoming "dead "to sin," and "alive from the dead," the being made "sons of "God, from children of wrath," these divines tell us, *now* mean "*nothing*," that is, as they explain it, "nothing to *us*, or to *any* "*one educated in a Christian country*."\* What Mr. *How* himself may think of his own prudence, after reading these extracts, I know not; but I should suppose that *others* could be at no loss what opinion to form on the subject.

Mr. *How* refers frequently, and with much triumph, to a passage toward the close of my letters in which he considers me as having advanced a claim as high and offensive as his own, and also, as having contradicted myself. The passage alluded to, is one which occurs in discussing the doctrine of *uninterrupted succession*, and is in the following words. "If, as we have proved in the foregoing "letters, the right of ordination, according to Scripture and primitive usage, belongs to *presbyters*, it is evident that the succession "through *them*, is as valid as any other: or rather, to speak more "properly, it is only so far as *any* succession flows through the "line of *presbyters*, that it is either regular or valid. It is the *laying* "on of the hands of the *presbytery*, that constitutes a scriptural

\* *Overton's True Churchmen Ascertained*. 2d Edit. p. 115—118. It will probably be contended by Mr. *How* and his friends in this controversy, that Mr. *Overton*, though a good *churchman*, is not accurate in his representation. He has indeed been loaded with much abuse by many for his fidelity. But it unluckily happens, that the editors of the *Christian Observer*, though warm Episcopalians, and men of great talents and learning, fully justify M. *Overton* in the substance of his representation. They think, it is true, that he scarcely does justice to Mr. *Daubeny*; but they acknowledge at the same time, that Mr. D. has too frequently expressed himself in a manner calculated to give countenance to the opinions ascribed to him.

“ordination; and it is because Episcopal bishops are *presbyters*,  
 “and assisted in all ordinations by *other presbyters*, that we con-  
 “sider their ordaining acts, on the principles of Scripture and primi-  
 “tive usage, as valid.” In this passage, Mr. H. asserts, that I have  
 pronounced Presbyterian ordination *alone* to be valid, and, of  
 course, have unchurched all who are destitute of it. Now as the  
 whole strain of my volume is of a different kind; and as, in various  
 parts of it, an opposite doctrine is explicitly avowed and maintain-  
 ed, candour, I think, should have dictated to this gentleman a more  
 favourable construction, even supposing my language to admit of  
 that which he puts upon it. But, in truth, when this passage is  
 examined, it will be found that the doctrine which it contains, is so  
 far from being high-toned and offensive, that it is taking the very  
*lowest* ground that any denomination of Christians, who hold to  
 a regular ministry at all, have maintained. What does it say? It  
 affirms that ordination by *presbyters* is valid, and that it is the *only*  
 ordination which the Scriptures warrant. Now the Presbyterian  
*pastors*, the episcopal *bishops*, the *ministers* of the Independent,  
 Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist churches, are all *presbyters*; and  
 of course, are all empowered to ordain. The doctrine of the above  
 cited passage, therefore, instead of being high-toned or exclusive,  
 recognizes as valid the ordinations of every church on earth, which  
 receives and acts on the principle that *clerical* ordination of *any*  
*kind* is necessary.

But after all, how has the episcopal claim been construed by  
 impartial judges? If, as these gentlemen assert, the most zealous  
 and high-toned advocates of prelacy, do not lay greater stress on  
 their particular form of church order, than Presbyterians do on  
 theirs; if they make no greater nor more offensive claims; how  
 has it come to pass that the contrary has been, by all parties, so  
 generally understood and acknowledged? How has it happened,  
 that every respectable Presbyterian who ever wrote on this subject  
 has utterly disclaimed sentiments in anywise resembling those of  
 the *jure divino* prelatists? How has it come to pass that many  
 warm friends of episcopacy have reprobated the claims of some of  
 their own denomination, as peculiar to themselves, as well as  
 groundless and offensive? How could such men as archbishop  
*Wake*, be so grossly deceived? *He*, in a letter to a Presbyterian  
 minister of *Geneva*, in the year 1719, pronounced the high-church-

men of his day, for advancing exactly such claims as those of Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*, to be *madmen*.\* Was this respectable prelate; were the great body of the most eminent writers, both Presbyterian and episcopal, who have treated of this subject for the last two hundred years, all ignorant and mistaken? I must be allowed to believe that they were at least as learned, and discerning, and that they understood the points in dispute, at least as well as either Dr. *Bowden* or Mr. *How*.

Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*, more than once accuse me of departing from the doctrine of our *Confession of Faith*, concerning the christian ministry; and express some apprehensions that I may be called to an account by my own church, for deviating from her standards. The former of these gentleman also observes, that, before he saw my *Letters*, he had supposed me to be a *Presbyterian*; but that to such *Presbyterianism* as mine both *Calvin* and *Knox* were entire strangers. The best refutation of these charges will be found in the facts exhibited in the following sheets; the slightest attention to which will convince you, that, until my opponents become *better acquainted* with our *Confession of Faith*, and also with the writings of Presbyterian Reformers, they are but ill qualified to pronounce what system agrees or is at variance with these great authorities.

But although I am not conscious of departing either from the letter or the spirit of that *Confession of Faith* which I have solemnly subscribed; and although I am confident that my Presbyterianism is substantially the same with that of *Calvin* and *Knox*; yet let us remember that we are to *call no man, or body of men, Master on earth*. *One is our Master, even Christ*. HIS WORD is the sole standard by which, as Christians, or as churches, we must stand or fall. Happy will it be for us, if we can appeal to the great Searcher of hearts, that we have not followed the traditions and inventions of men, but the *sure word of prophecy*, which is given us to be *a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path, to guide us in the way of peace!*

\* See my former *letters*, p. 174, 175.

## LETTER III.

## TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN the second letter of my former series, I endeavoured to establish the principle, that the *only* testimony by which the controversy in question ever ought to be, or can be decided, is that of *Scripture*. The word of God is the only perfect and infallible rule of faith and practice. The moment we quit this ground, we are plunged into all the uncertainty of tradition, and into all the confusion of contradictory testimony. The moment we quit this ground, the defence of *Protestantism* against the *Papists* is impossible. In this general principle, our episcopal brethren concur. They acknowledge that the question before us is a matter of *fact*, to be ascertained by a sound interpretation of Scripture. And yet, for the most part, they have no sooner made the acknowledgment, than they contradict themselves, by setting human authority above the inspired volume.

In this inconsistent course, Dr. *Bowden* has signalized himself. He has, indeed, pursued it with a degree of boldness which is truly rare. He does not think it necessary even to save appearances. Instead of assigning to Scripture the first and highest place; instead of beginning with it, and permitting it to stand on its own proper eminence, he *begins* with the *fathers*! Nor is this all. As if afraid of examining and exhibiting the testimony of the fathers in their *natural order*, from the apostolic age downwards, he begins



with the fathers of the *fourth century* ; reasons backward ; assumes the corrupt principles and language of that age as genuine, and then employs them to interpret the primitive writers ; and thus endeavours to make his readers believe that the order of the church was the same in the *fourth*, that it had been in the *first* century ; and that the words *bishop, elder, deacon*, meant exactly the same thing in the days of *Eusebius, Basil, and Jerome*, that they had done in the days of the apostles. I thank Dr. *Bowden* for the important concessions which this course of reasoning tacitly discloses. I thank him for the manifest unwillingness which he discovers to encounter either the testimony of *Scripture* alone, or the testimony of the *early fathers* alone. His very *arrangement of evidence* speaks more than volumes. Of the *fairness* of this arrangement, I say nothing. No reader of the smallest discernment needs a single remark to aid him in judging of this point. But I could scarcely have asked for a more humiliating confession of the weakness of his cause, and of his distressing consciousness that neither *Scripture* nor early antiquity will bear him out in his claims, than is to be found in this management, which he, no doubt, considered as a master stroke of policy. But this gentleman goes a step further. After conducting his readers through a catalogue of quotations, placed in retrograde order, from the fourth century upward to the apostles ; after presenting to them a corresponding series of pictures in an inverted, and therefore deceptive light ; and after bringing them, wearied and perplexed, to the dividing line between the fathers and the canon of *Scripture*, he expresses himself in the following terms : “ As episcopacy appears from a cloud of witnesses to be the government of the church at the close of the apostolic age, *it can never be admitted that any thing in the New Testament militates against this fact.*” *Letters*, i. p. 240. The plain English of this declaration is, “ The controversy is to be decided by the fathers. In approaching the inspired volume, we are *previously to take for granted* that it does not, and cannot contain any thing contrary to their testimony. And even if it *appears* to contain facts or principles inconsistent with their writings, we are to draw our conclusions from the *latter* rather than the *former*. Were the scriptures to teach otherwise than the fathers, we could not believe them.” I do not say that this doctrine is, in so many

words, avowed by the reverend professor ; nor even that he distinctly recognizes such a monstrous position in his own mind : but I will say, that such is the *spirit* of the principle which he lays down, and that I verily believe him to have been governed by it in all his reasonings.

But although my opponents discover so much reluctance to be judged by *the law, and the testimony*, I hope, my brethren, *we* shall never so far forget our character as Christians and Protestants, as to suffer our faith or practice to be tried by any other test. I will, therefore, request your serious and impartial attention to some further remarks on the scriptural evidence relative to the subject before us. You will not expect me, however, again to go over the whole ground of the scriptural argument. I shall only advert to a few points on which either the most plausible or the most exceptionable strictures have been made on our principles, as formerly advanced and defended.

I again assert, then, that there is not to be found in the whole New Testament a single doctrine or fact, which yields the least solid support to the cause of prelacy ; but that, on the contrary, the whole strain of the evangelical records is favourable to the doctrine of ministerial parity.

Dr. *Bowden* still insists that the *angels* of the seven Asiatic churches, spoken of in Rev. ii. and iii. were no other than *diocesan bishops*. But really he does little more than assert and re-assert this, without producing any proof that deserves to be considered even as plausible. I had asked, "Is it certain that by these *angels* are meant *individual ministers*?" Dr. *Bowden* replies "I think there can be no doubt of it." A very strong argument, it must be acknowledged ! But unfortunately there *is* much doubt of it. Some of the most learned and able Episcopalians that ever lived, have not only *doubted*, but *denied* it. And Dr. *Mason* has lately shown, with a force of argument which, in my opinion, no impartial mind can resist, that the title of *angel* in this portion of scripture, is a symbolical term, intended to express the *ministry collectively* of each of those churches ; that both the phraseology and matter of the addresses made to the angels are, in several instances, such as could only be directed to collective bodies ; and that to consider the title as designating an *individual*, is a con-

struction attended not only with insuperable difficulty, but with manifest absurdity.\*

But, admitting that this term designates *individual* ministers, does it follow that they can be no other than *diocesan bishops*? By no means. The *angels* of *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, &c. might have been, as was observed in my former *letters*, the *moderators* of the presbyteries of those cities respectively; or they might have been the *senior pastors*, to whom, on account of their standing and age, all communications intended for the churches in which they ministered, were, by common consent, directed. The rector of *Trinity Church*, in the city of *New York*, has *five* congregations under his pastoral care, and is aided by the labours of several assistant clergymen; yet this rector is not, as such, a bishop; nor are his assistant clergymen inferior *in order* to him. The whole city of *Edinburgh*, in *Scotland*, is *one parish*, while there are near twenty churches, and more than twenty ministers, within and belonging to that parish; still all these ministers are ecclesiastically equal, excepting that there is a moderator of the city presbytery, who has certain powers vested in him, for convening the body, and preserving order during the sessions; and to whom, also, all letters are directed, and all communications made. And yet this is not considered as at all infringing the doctrine of Presbyterian parity. In truth, neither the *title* of *angel*, nor the *addresses* made to those on whom it was bestowed, nor any of the *powers* implied in these addresses, give the least countenance to the system of prelacy; and to suppose that they do, is as gross an instance of begging the whole question in dispute, as can well be produced.

Dr. *Bowden* appears, indeed, to be sensible, that the scriptures, left to speak for themselves, by no means decide that the *angels* in question were *prelates*: he, therefore, has recourse to *Irenæus*, *Clemens* of *Alexandria*, *Eusebius*, *Ambrose*, &c. to help him out in his difficulty. *They*, it seems, assert that these *angels* were the

\* See that gentleman's very luminous and able *review* of the *episcopal essays* in the *Christian's Magazine*. This work, which I consider as one of the ablest periodical publications that ever appeared, ought to be in the hands of every one who wishes to attain clear and sound views of "evangelical truth and order."

*bishops* of the respective churches mentioned in connexion with their names. But supposing these fathers to be, in all respects, credible witnesses ; and supposing, too, that their assertion is founded, not on conjecture, but authentic records ; it still remains to be ascertained in *what sense* they use the word *bishop*. What *kind* of bishops do they mean ? Such bishops as the Presbyterian, and the great body of the reformed churches, allow to have existed in the days of the apostles, and still retain, or such as our episcopal brethren contend for ? Dr. *Bowden* undertakes to assert that they were of the *latter kind* ; but he says it without authority ; for the fathers whom he quotes as witnesses, do not say so. They might have been *scriptural bishops*, without, in the least degree, serving the episcopal argument.

Dr. *Bowden* endeavours to press the learned *Blondel* into his service, by representing him as admitting that the *angels* of the Asiatic churches are addressed as “ having jurisdiction over both clergy and laity ;” and thus by implication as acknowledging the existence of *diocesan episcopacy* in the apostolic age. This is a mistake. *Blondel* says no such thing. After investigating this subject perhaps as profoundly as any man ever did, he tells us, that during the apostolic age, and for a considerable time after, bishop and presbyter were reciprocally one and the same ; that these were combined into *classes* or *presbyteries* ; that the eldest *minister, pastor, or bishop* belonging to the presbytery, was, by virtue of his seniority, *constantly the moderator* ; that when he died, the *next in age* succeeded him, *of course*, and continued to hold the place during life. “ These senior pastors,” says he, “ had a certain singular and peerless power, such a power as *all moderators*, after whatsoever manner constituted, ever had, and “ ever will have, belonging to them. Neither was the moderator “ of any of these sacred colleges, chief among his colleague pres- “ byters, as a presbyter, or as one placed in higher order above all “ the other presbyters ; but as the *eldest* and *first ordained* pastor. “ Nor did the rest as *presbyters*, but as *younger* presbyters, and “ afterwards ordained, yield the moderatorship to him. His office “ was to exhort the brotherhood ; to war a good warfare ; to com- “ mend them to God by prayer ; to gather the presbytery ; to give “ them a good example ; and to declare himself to be a diligent “ messenger of God to mankind. And, therefore, as Christ does in

“his admonitions to the angels of the Asiatic churches, both the good and the evil deeds of the churches might be imputed to these moderators.” And again he says: “*Linus*, as he was a *bishop*, had for colleagues *Clement* and *Anacletus*, who were shortly after ordained bishops, with himself, in the same church of Rome. But as he was the *exarch* or *moderator* of the *brethren*, he neither had, nor could have any *colleagues*, (seeing the *moderation* can only fall to one person at once) but only *successors*. There was a plurality of bishops, presbyters, or governors, at same time, and in the same church. All these pastors or bishops, on the very account of their *presbyterate*, were endued with equal power and honour. The *moderator* was subject to the *presbytery*, and obeyed its commands with no less submission than did the meanest of their number. He had the chief power in the college of presbyters, but had no power over the college itself.” And, as if this learned man had been aware of every cavil that ignorance or sophistry could suggest, he expressly compares these *ancient moderators* with the *moderators of presbyteries*, in the reformed churches of *Scotland* and *France*, and assigns to the former no more power or pre-eminence than belongs to the latter. *Blondelli Apolog. Præfat. pag. 6, 7. 18. 35. 38.* I make no comment on Dr. *Bowden's* perversion of these plain declarations. If he fell into it *ignorantly*, he is to be excused; if *wilfully* no reader will be at a loss for appropriate reflections.

Of the same character, and equally destitute of force, is all that Dr. *Bowden* has advanced to show that *Timothy* and *Titus* were *prelates*. After filling about thirty pages with what he calls his *proofs* of this point, he will really be found, when closely examined, to have done little more than beg the whole question in dispute.

He insists that *Timothy* and *Titus* were not sent to *Ephesus* and *Crete* in the character of *Evangelists*; that they had finished all the labours which belonged to them in this character, *before* they went thither; and that their principal duties in those places were of an higher kind, and appropriate to an higher office. Nay, he formally sets it down, in a long catalogue, as one of my “unfounded assertions,” that I represent them as acting in that capacity in the *Ephesian* and *Cretian* churches. Has Dr. *Bowden* ever read that portion of the New Testament which is called the

*second epistle to Timothy?* Does not the apostle *Paul* say to *Timothy*, in that epistle, *Do the work of an evangelist?* And was this written *before* he went to *Ephesus*? Truly, when this gentleman can permit himself, with so little ceremony, to contradict an inspired apostle, I need not wonder that others fare so roughly in his hands. Nor will it afford any relief to his cause, to cavil about the meaning of the word *evangelist*. Whatever it *then* meant, or may *now* mean, it is certain that *Paul* applied it to *Timothy*, and that after he had been sent on his *Ephesian* mission. And if it were applied to *Timothy*, no good reason can be assigned why it may not, with equal propriety, be applied to *Titus*. In fact, if it be conceded that the former was an *Evangelist*, and acted as such, when the epistles directed to him were written, the friends of prelacy can have no interest in contending that the latter bore a different character; for the same reasoning, in substance, applies to both.

But *Dr. Bowden* still contends, that *Timothy* and *Titus* were diocesan bishops, because they were empowered to *ordain* others to the work of the gospel ministry? Shall we never have done with this begging of the whole question, in a manner so unworthy of logicians and divines? Suppose they were empowered to *ordain*? What then? Do we not consider *presbyters* as invested with this power? And is it not the great object of *Dr. Bowden's* book to show that it was otherwise? Why, then, does he attempt to impose upon his readers by taking the main point for granted? Let him first prove that, in the primitive church, none were permitted to *ordain*, but an order of ministers superior to *presbyters*, and then his argument from the fact of *Timothy* and *Titus* having been invested with the ordaining power, will be conclusive; but until he shall have established the former, which neither he nor any other man has done, or can do, the latter will be considered, by every discerning reader, as worse than trifling.

*Dr. Bowden* and his friends also lay great stress on another point. They take for granted that there had been *Elders* (or *presbyters*) ordained by the apostle *Paul* himself, both at *Ephesus* and *Crete* before *Timothy* and *Titus* were sent to those places. Assuming this as a fact, they say, these *presbyters*, on Presbyterian principles, must have been invested with the ordaining power; but if this were so, why were others sent on so long a journey, to



perform that which persons on the spot could have done as well? Here, again, every thing is taken for granted. Where did Dr. B. learn that there had been presbyters fixed either in *Ephesus* or *Crete*, before *Timothy* or *Titus* went thither? The sacred history says no such thing. With what face, then, can any man undertake to found his whole argument on a mere assumption? It is certain that the epistle to *Titus* contains a direction to *ordain elders in every city*. There were, therefore, *some* cities, at least, which were not furnished with the requisite number, and probably with none at all. But admitting that there were elders already ordained both at *Ephesus* and *Crete*, still the argument is good for nothing. That some portions of those churches were unfurnished with ministers of any kind, and that they were all in a comparatively unorganized and immature state, is perfectly manifest from the whole strain of the apostle's language concerning them. Was it unnatural, on Presbyterian principles, that in this state of things, *special missionaries* should be sent among them; men well known as possessing the entire confidence of the apostle; fully instructed in their duty; and qualified to travel from place to place, and *set in order the things which were wanting*? Might not many prudential considerations have rendered it expedient to send such eminent characters from a distance, rather than to select men of less distinguished and commanding reputation on the spot, to perform a service as delicate as it was arduous? In fact this is precisely the course which has been, more than once, pursued, in Presbyterian churches, when they were in an unsettled state, without any one ever dreaming that it infringed the doctrine of ministerial parity; or that it implied any deficiency of power in those ministers who resided nearer the scene of action.

But Dr. *Bowden* further contends, that *Timothy* and *Titus* were empowered to ordain *alone*; that is, that in the ordinations which they performed at *Ephesus* and *Crete*, there were no other ordainers joined with them; and hence he infers that the Presbyterian doctrine cannot be true, because our rules do not admit of ordination by a single presbyter. Here, once more, this dextrous disputant takes for granted the very thing to be proved. Who informed him that *Timothy* was the *sole* ordainer at *Ephesus*, and *Titus* at *Crete*? The epistles to those evangelists do not say so. Is he *sure* that they had not travelling companions, of equal power with them-

selves, who united with them in every ordination? can he determine for what purpose *Mark* travelled with *Timothy*; and *Zenas* and *Apollos* with *Titus*? Or can he undertake to say that these persons never joined in setting apart others to the ministry? Dr. B. is confident there had been presbyters ordained, both at *Ephesus* and *Crete* before these *evangelists* went thither. Now, if there *were* such presbyters in those churches, will he venture to assert, that one or more of these were not always joined with *Timothy* and *Titus* in ordaining other presbyters? In short, neither Dr. B. nor any other man knows any thing about these matters; and yet he assumes facts, and argues upon them with as much confidence, as if he were perfectly acquainted with every minute particular.

This gentleman, however, still pleads, that directions about ordaining ministers, and regulating the affairs of the church were given to *Timothy* and *Titus* alone; that we hear of no others joined with them in those instructions; and that we have no right to suppose there were such. This plea does not deserve an answer; but it shall have one. Suppose one of our Presbyteries or Synods were to send out a company of two or three missionaries; and for the sake of convenience, were to convey their instructions in the form of a letter to the oldest and most prudent of the number; would this individual have reason to consider himself as a person of a superior order, on account of such a circumstance? Again, when we ordain a minister, the person who *presides* in the ordination generally recites to the newly admitted

\* Dr. *Bowden* appears to think it strange that I suggest the possibility that some of the presbyters of *Ephesus* and *Crete* might have been united with *Timothy* and *Titus* in their ordaining acts; when I had before represented it as utterly uncertain whether there were such presbyters in existence, and as rather probable that there were not. But there is no inconsistency here. I only mean to show that Dr. B. does not know whether there *were* or *were not* such presbyters; and that he can gain nothing by either supposition. If there were *none such* at *Ephesus* or *Crete* before these evangelists were sent, then a fundamental argument in favour of the prelatical character of *Timothy* and *Titus* is destroyed. If there *were* such, then they might have assisted, for aught we know, in every ordination: and then another boasted argument on the same side falls to the ground. Which ever supposition is adopted, it is equally fatal.

brother many passages from the epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, seldom omitting, in particular, the injunction—*Lay hands suddenly on no man*. But no minister ever considered this mode of address, as constituting him the *sole* ordainer in any case in which he should afterwards act. It would be as reasonable to say, that because the apostle gave *Timothy* direction about public preaching, *therefore* HE alone was empowered to preach; or, because he was instructed with respect to some parts of public prayer,\* *therefore* HE only was allowed to pray. But there would be no end to such absurdities. It is really wonderful that gentlemen who appear to be serious, should lay so much stress on arguments, much better calculated to pour ridicule on their cause, than to afford it efficient aid.

But, admitting that *Timothy* and *Titus* each acted as *sole* ordainers at *Ephesus* and *Crete*—the probability is, that they did not; but, supposing it proved that they *did*, it does not affect the question in dispute. Although Presbyterians, wishing to conform as perfectly as possible to scriptural example, require a *plurality* of ministers to be present, and to lay on their hands in ordination; yet I have no reason to suppose that any Presbyterian minister or church, would consider an ordination performed, in a case of necessity, by a single presbyter, as null and void. Supposing it proved, therefore, that an inspired apostle, in a new and unsettled state of the church, sent forth evangelists *singly* to preach, ordain, and organize churches, it would establish nothing, either way, material to the present controversy.

Every thing, therefore, that Dr. *Bowden* has advanced to estab-

\* By the way, it is not a little remarkable that the apostle should content himself with giving *Timothy* only *general directions* with respect to public prayer, and even these only with regard to *some* of the objects of petition. Where were the *Liturgies* of those times? Had *Forms of Prayer* been so indispensably necessary, or, at least, so *pre-eminently important*, as our episcopal brethren tell us they are, and always have been, why did not *Paul*, or some other of the apostles, furnish the churches with *Liturgies* written by themselves, and under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost? How shall we account for it, that instead of sending *Timothy* a *form*, he only laid down for him a few *general words of direction*? But this is not the only instance in which the apostles appear to have been of a different mind from some modern churchmen.

lish the prelatical character of *Timothy* and *Titus*, is perfectly nugatory. It is all mere assumption, instead of proof; and were it not for the respectable character of the author, would be totally unworthy of reply. He has no where proved that these ministers went to *Ephesus* and *Crete* in a higher character than that of *itinerant presbyters*. He has no where proved that they were the fixed *pastors* or *bishops* of the churches which he undertakes to assign to them. He has no where proved that there were presbyters in those churches, before these evangelists were sent thither, who might, on Presbyterian principles, have performed the rite of ordination, without the trouble and expense of sending special missionaries to so great a distance. He has no where proved that *Timothy* or *Titus* was, either of them, the *sole* ordainer in any case. He has no where, in short, established a single fact concerning either of them, which has the least appearance of prelatical superiority. Even if he *could* establish these facts, his point would not be gained. He would, after all, be obliged to show, that they took place in a *regular* and *established* and not in a *new* and *unsettled* state of the church; and that they were intended to serve, in every minute particular, as *precedents*. But he has not proved, and cannot prove, either the one or the other. I therefore repeat, with increased confidence, the closing sentence of the discussion of this subject in my former letters. “The argument which our episcopal brethren derive from *Timothy* and *Titus* is absolutely worth nothing; and after all the changes that may be rung upon it, and all the decorations with which it may be exhibited, it amounts only to a gratuitous assumption of the whole point in dispute.”

As to the testimony adduced from the *fathers*, to establish the prelatical character of *Timothy* and *Titus*, it is more, much more, suited, in the view of all intelligent readers, to discredit than to aid the episcopal cause. I had quoted from Dr. Whitby, an eminent episcopal divine, the following passage.—“The great controversy concerning this, and the epistle to *Timothy* is, whether *Timothy* and *Titus* were indeed made bishops, the one of *Ephesus*, and the pro-consular *Asia*; the other of *Crete*. Now of this matter I confess I can find nothing in any writer of the *first three centuries*, nor any intimation that they bore that name.” Dr. Bowden virtually concurs in this statement of Dr. Whitby; for

though he speaks with much confidence of the testimony of the *fathers* on this point, yet the first authentic witness,\* among the fathers, whom he brings forward is *Eusebius*, who says, “it is related that *Timothy* was the first bishop of *Ephesus*.” Now *Eusebius* does indeed say so ; but he also declares, generally, that his sources of information were exceedingly scanty and uncertain ; and, in particular, he confesses, that it was not easy to say, who were left bishops of the several churches, by the apostles, except so far as might be gathered from the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Epistles of Paul*. *Eccles. Hist. Lib. III. Cap. 4.* Here, then, is the sum of the evidence from the *fathers*, as to this point. *Eusebius* stands first on the list. He quotes as his authority, the *New Testament*. All the others, as *Ambrose*, *Epiphanius*, *Jerome*, *Chrysostom*, &c. follow *Eusebius*. The fathers, then, virtually confess that they knew no more of the matter than we do ; and of course their whole testimony is, to us, perfectly worthless.

But some of the fathers speak on this subject in a manner that is somewhat unfortunate for the episcopal cause. On the one hand, several of them represent *Timothy* and *Titus*, and especially the former, as more than a single bishop, as bearing the dignity of an *archbishop* or *metropolitan*. Now, as *Dr. Bowden*, and his friends, acknowledge that there were no *archbishops* in the apostle’s days, they must of course consider this testimony as false and worthless. On the other hand, one of the fathers quoted by *Dr. Bowden*, (*Chrysostom*) in his *Commentary* on *Titus* i. 5. speaks of that evangelist in the following clear and decisive terms : “*That thou mayest ordain elders*, says the apostle : he means *bishops*. In every city, says he, for he would not have the whole Island committed to one man, but that every one should have and mind his own proper cure ; for so he knew the labour would be easier

\* *Dr. Bowden* does, indeed, adduce one witness, whom he places before *Eusebius*, in the following words. “From a fragment of a treatise by *Polycrates*, bishop of *Ephesus*, towards the close of the second century. This fragment is preserved in *Photius’s Bibliotheca*, and quoted by archbishop *Usker* in his discourse on episcopacy. In that fragment it is said, that ‘*Timothy* was ordained bishop of *Ephesus* by the great *Paul*.’” Nobody has ever seen the original work of *Polycrates* ; but *Photius*, who was patriarch of *Constantinople*, towards the close of the ninth century, has preserved, it seems, a fragment of it in his *Bibliotheca*.

“to him, and the people to be governed would have more care  
“taken of them ; since their teacher would not run about to go-  
“vern *many churches* ; but would attend to the ruling of *one* only,  
“and so would keep it in good order.”

Here, *Chrysostom* expressly declares, that *Titus* was not the bishop of all *Crete* ; that he was sent, not to take the fixed pastoral charge of the Island, but to place its churches under a permanent and regular ministry ; that the apostolic direction was to set a bishop over every particular church : and that a single church was quite enough for a scriptural bishop to have under his care. In short, the whole passage is so entirely Presbyterian in its strain, that its force in our favour can be overlooked by none.

But one of the most extraordinary parts of Dr. *Bowden's* work, is that in which he undertakes to answer my argument drawn from the constitution of the *Jewish synagogue*. I had shown, in my second letter, that the *synagogue* worship universally prevailed among the Jews, at the time of our Lord's coming in the flesh ; that the apostles, in organizing christian churches, willing to conform as far as possible, to the habits and prejudices of the first converts to Christianity, who were Jews, deviated as little as circumstances would admit from the *synagogue* model ; that this model was Presbyterian in its form : and that the nature of the public service, the names and duties of church officers, the manner of ordination, &c. were all transferred from the *synagogue* to the *church*. It is not easy to exhibit this argument in its native strong light before common readers, because few have any tolerable acquaintance with Jewish antiquities. But the more I reflect upon it, the more deeply I am persuaded, that, when properly stated and understood, it will be found an argument of the most conclusive and satisfactory kind.

Dr. *Bowden*, however, views it as wholly destitute of force. This, indeed, might be expected from a man, who, as we have lately seen, is hardy enough to dissent from a direct statement of the Apostle *Paul*. But let us examine his objection and his reasonings.

In the first place, Dr. B. insists that the christian church could not have been organized after the model of the *Jewish synagogue*, because the *synagogue* did not, properly speaking, partake of the character of the church ; being a mere *human institution*, and



resting on no other basis than *human authority*. He asserts, that my not adverting to this fact, is the foundation of my whole error; and that the due consideration of it will completely destroy my argument. I trust, however, that a few remarks will be sufficient to show that the want of due consideration is on *his* part, and not on mine; and that the argument stands firm and unanswerable, notwithstanding all he has said.

When Dr. *Bowden* so confidently asserts that the synagogue was a *mere* human institution; that no Jew was under *any obligation* to attend upon its service; and that, being a mere creature of man, every one was at liberty, in the sight of God, to treat it as he pleased; when he makes these assertions, he ought to know that he is speaking wholly without authority. Who told the learned professor all these things? If he can inform us *when* synagogues were instituted, by *whom*, and from *what source* the suggestion or command to establish them came, he will render a piece of service to ecclesiastical history, for which all its students will have reason to thank him: for, truly, no other person has ever yet been able with any degree of certainty to give us this information. But if he cannot give a decisive answer to any one of these questions, how could he dare to speak on the subject in the manner that he has ventured to do? It is certain that *synagogues* are mentioned in the 78th *Psalms*, and that they are there called *synagogues of God*. It is certain that putting an offender *out of the synagogue*, was a well known mode of speaking among the Jews, to express *excommunication from the church*; and it is equally certain, that our Lord and his apostles attended the synagogue service every sabbath day, and thus gave it their decided sanction. Now, all these taken together, look, to say the least, like something more than mere human contrivance. If, as some suppose, the synagogue was instituted by *Ezra*, after the Babylonish captivity, and none, that I know, ascribe to it a later, or less respectable origin, even this supposition will not aid Dr. *Bowden*, or countenance his reasoning. Was not *Ezra* an *inspired man*? And will not, of course, an institution of *his*, rest on substantially the same ground, as to authority, with an institution established or enjoined by *Peter* or *Paul*?

But granting to Dr. *Bowden* all that he asks; granting that the synagogue was a mere human institution; that it made no part of

the Jewish church, properly so called ; and that no Jew was under any divine obligation to attend on its service ; what does he gain by the concession ? Nothing. It is so far from destroying my argument, that it does not affect or even touch it. Dr. B. does not deny that synagogues *existed*, and were *in use*, at the time in which the apostles were called upon to form their Jewish converts into Christian churches. *How* they came into use, or by *what authority* they were introduced are questions foreign from the present inquiry. Again, Dr. B. does not deny, that every particular synagogue had three classes of officers, a *bishop*, *elders*, and *deacons* ; that the peculiar office of the *bishop*, (or as he was sometimes called, the *angel of the church*) was to *preside* in the public service, and *lead the devotions* of the people ; that the principal duty of the bench of *elders*, was to assist in *ruling the synagogue*, and administering its *discipline* ;\* and that the *deacons*, though sometimes called to the performance of other services, were particularly charged with collecting and distributing alms for the *poor*. Dr. B. does not deny, that *ordination* by the *imposition of hands* was always employed in constituting the synagogue ministry. And finally, he does not deny, that reading the sacred scriptures expounding them, and offering up public prayers, formed the ordinary service of the synagogue. He does not deny that *all* these were found in the *synagogue*, and that *none* of them were found in the *temple* service. This is conceding all that I desire, or that my argument demands. I care not what doubts may be started concerning the *date* or the *origin* of these institutions. All that I have to do with, are the great and indubitable *facts*, that they were *in use* among the Jews ; and that in organizing the Christian church, the apostles, acting in the name, and under the authority of Christ, appointed for the church the same *classes* of officers as existed in the synagogue ; gave them the same *names* ; assigned to them similar *duties* ; directed their *ordination* to be solemnized in the same manner ; and prescribed for them, substantially, the same course of public *service*. Can any thing be more conclusive ? He who can reject this plain induction of facts, will find it difficult to be satisfied with demonstration itself.

\* Dr. Bowden explicitly grants that there was a class of officers in every Jewish synagogue, similar to the *ruling elders* in the Presbyterian church. We shall hereafter see that this is an important concession.

You will now be able, my brethren, to judge between Dr. *Bowden* and me, with respect to this point; or rather between the Presbyterian and episcopal doctrine. We say that the Christian church was formed by the apostles after the model of the Jewish synagogue; while those who contend for the divine right of diocesan episcopacy, assert, that it was organized, after the model of the *temple* service. We produce proof. We show that the organization and service of the Christian church, resemble the temple in *scarcely any thing*; while they resemble the synagogue in almost *every thing*. We show that there were *bishops, elders, and deacons* in the synagogue; but not in the temple: That there was *ordination* by the *imposition of hands* in the synagogue, but no ordination at all in the temple: That there were reading the scriptures, expounding them, and public prayers, *every sabbath day*, in the synagogue; while the body of the people\* went up to the temple only *three times a year*, and even then to attend on a very different service: That in the synagogue, there was a system established, which included a weekly provision not only for the instruction and devotions of the people, but also for the maintenance of discipline, and the care of the poor; while scarcely any thing of this kind was to be found in the temple. Now, in all these respects, and in many more which might be mentioned, the Christian church followed the synagogue, and departed from the temple. Could we trace a resemblance in *one* or a *few* points, it might be considered as accidental; but the resemblance is so close, so striking, and extends to so many particulars, as to arrest the attention of the most careless inquirer. It was, indeed, notoriously so great in the early ages, that the heathen frequently suspected and charged Christian churches, with being Jewish synagogues in disguise. But with respect to the *temple* service, this resemblance is, in almost every particular, entirely wanting. I ask, then, after which of these models was the Christian church formed? The answer is so plain, that I should insult your understandings, by supposing it possible for you to doubt.

\* Only the *males*, it will be observed, were required to go up to *Jerusalem*, three times a year. If, therefore, Dr. *Bowden's* position, that the synagogue service was a mere human invention, be admitted, then it will follow, that there was no public religious service of divine institution in which the Jewish *females* could ever join! Is this probable?

It is vain to object as Dr. *Bowden* does, that the resemblance between the Christian church and the synagogue is not absolutely *perfect* as to *every minute particular*. This does not affect the general principle. He objects, for instance, that neither *baptism* nor the *Lord's Supper* is to be found in the synagogue service. Be it so. But were they to be found in the *temple service*, for the resemblance of which to the Christian church, he so ardently contends? No. *Baptism*, among the Jews had no connexion with the temple; and with respect to the *Passover*, it was instituted long before the temple had a being; and has been continued near eighteen hundred years since it was no more.

But Dr. *Bowden* is incorrect in his *premises*, as well as in his *conclusion*. Both *baptism* and the *passover*, though they had no connexion with the temple, *were* connected with the synagogue. The ministers of the synagogue admitted proselytes to their communion by baptising parents and children. To constitute a regular Jewish baptism, it was necessary that three *elders* of the synagogue should be present. The synagogue officers also determined the question of right who should eat the passover. In fact, the synagogue officers did admit proselytes into the Jewish church, and excommunicate offenders. They had the care of the whole discipline from the time of *Ezra*. The priests, it is true, had a voice; but it was as members of the *Sanhedrim*, and not as officers of the temple.

As to Dr. B.'s objection, that the organization of the Christian church cannot resemble that of the synagogue, because the *bishop* of the synagogue had only the charge of a *single congregation*, whereas he is persuaded that the *Christian bishop* has a charge extending over many congregations—I can only say, that while it includes a most ludicrous begging of the question in debate, it carries with it also a most important concession, which I take for granted the Dr. was not aware of; but which is fatal to his cause. He grants that the *bishop* of the synagogue, (and of course, the only kind of *bishop* to which the first converts to Christianity had been accustomed,) was the pastor, or presiding officer, over a *single congregation*. Now if the model of the synagogue, and not of the temple, was adopted by the apostles, it affords a strong presumption that the scriptural bishop was, what we suppose him to have been, the pastor of a single church. In fact, Dr. B. fully

concedes this: for, in another part of his work, he frankly acknowledges that, in the days of the apostles, the title of *bishop* was currently applied to the pastors of particular churches. There is nothing now wanting, even on Dr. B.'s own principles, to render the resemblance between the synagogue and the church *complete*, so far as the *officers* of each are concerned, but to find *ruling elders* in the primitive church. But a bench of *ruling elders*, corresponding with those who bear that name in our church, he acknowledges belonged to the synagogue; and in the next letter I hope to prove, to the satisfaction of every impartial mind, that such officers were instituted in the primitive church.

The great principle for which I am contending, viz. that the Christian church was organized on the model of the synagogue, has been received and maintained by a number of the ablest divines that ever wrote on the subject, both *Presbyterian* and *Episcopal*. But all testimonies adduced from the former will be viewed, by Dr. *Bowden* and his friends, with a suspicious eye. I shall, therefore, pass by all that has been said on this subject, by the incomparably learned and able Professor *Vitringa*, of *Holland*, and by that prodigy of erudition, the celebrated *Selden*, of *England*—because they were Presbyterians.\* But I hope my opponents in this controversy will pay some respect to the following quotations from some of the most respectable writers in their own church, who concede all that I ask or desire.

The first quotation shall be taken from Bishop *Burnet*. “Among the Jews, (says he) he who was the chief of the *Synagogue*, was called *Chazan Hakeneseth*, i. e. *the bishop of the congregation*, and *Sheliach Tsibbor*, *the angel of the church*. “And the Christian church being modelled as near the form of the synagogue as they could be; as they retained many of the rites, so *the form of the government was continued*, and *the names remained the same*.” And again, “In the synagogues there was, first, one who was called *the bishop of the congregation*; next the three orderers and judges of every thing about the synagogue; who were called *Tsekenim*, and by the Greeks *πρεσβυτεροι*, or *γερωντες*, that is, *elders*. These ordered and

\* I call *Selden* a *Presbyterian*, because though not a thorough advocate for Presbyterianism, *strictly* so called, he was decidedly anti-episcopal.

“determined every thing that concerned the synagogue, or the persons in it. Next them were the three *Parnassin* or *deacons*, whose charge was to gather the collections of the rich, and distribute them to the poor.”\*

The next quotation shall be taken from Dr. *Lightfoot*, another Episcopal divine, not less distinguished for his learning and talents. “The apostle,” (says he) “calleth the minister, *Episcopus* (or *bishop*) from the common and known title of the *Chazan* or *Overseer* in the *Synagogue*.” And again, “Besides these, there was the public minister of the synagogue, who prayed publicly, and took care about reading the law, and sometimes preached, if there were not some other to discharge this office. This person was called *Sheliach Tsibbor*, the *angel of the church*, and *Chazan Hakeneseth* the *Chazan* or *bishop of the Congregation*. The *Aruch* gives the reason of the name. The *Chazan*, says he, is *Sheliach Tsibbor*, the *angel of the church*, (or the public minister,) and the *Targum* renders the word *Roveh* by the word *Hose*, one that *oversees*. For it is incumbent on him to oversee how the reader reads, and whom he may call out to read in the law. The public minister of the synagogue himself read not the law publicly, but every Sabbath he called out seven of the Synagogue (on other days fewer) whom he judged fit to read. He stood by him that read, with great care observing that he read nothing either falsely, or improperly, and calling him back, and correcting him, if he had failed in any thing. And hence he was called *Chazan*, that is,  $\text{ἐπίσκοπος}$ , i. e. *bishop* or *overseer*. Certainly the signification of the word *bishop* and *angel of the church*, had been determined with less noise, if recourse had been had to the proper fountains, and men had not vainly disputed about the signification of words taken I know not whence. The service and worship of the temple being abolished, as being ceremonial, God transplanted the worship and public adoration of God used in the synagogues, which was moral, into the Christian church; viz. the public ministry, public prayers, reading God’s word, and preaching, &c. Hence the names of the ministers of the Gospel were the very same, the *angel of the church*, the *bishop* which belonged to the ministers

\* *Observations* on the 1. *Can.* p. 2. and 11. *Can.* p. 83.



“in the *synagogues*. There were also three *deacons*, or *almoners*,  
“on whom was the *care of the poor*.”\*

The celebrated *Grotius*,† whose great learning and talents will be considered by all as giving much weight to his opinion on any subject, is full and decided in maintaining that the primitive church was formed after the model of the *synagogue*. Many passages might be quoted from his writings, in which this opinion is directly asserted. The following may suffice. In his commentary on *Acts* xi. 30. he expresses himself thus: “The whole polity (*regimen*) of the Christian church was conformed to the pattern “of the *synagogue*.” And in his commentary on 1 *Tim.* v. 17. he has the following passage. “Formerly, in large cities, as there “were many *synagogues*, so there were also many churches, or “separate meetings of Christians. And every particular church “had its own president, or bishop, who instructed the people, and “ordained presbyters. In *Alexandria* ALONE it was the custom “to have but one president or bishop, for the whole city, who “distributed presbyters through the city for the purpose of “instructing the people; as we are taught by *Sozomen.* i. 14.”

The next point in Dr. *Bowden's* exhibition of scriptural testimony, which demands attention, is the alleged episcopal character of *James* over the church of *Jerusalem*. This argument in favour of prelacy, was wholly omitted in my former volume, not because there was any difficulty in answering it, but because it really appeared to me too frivolous to be seriously considered. Dr. *Bowden*, however, having no arguments to spare, has brought it forward with much confidence, and seems to consider it, like every other on the episcopal side, as *perfectly conclusive*. Indeed he appears to regard me as guilty of injustice to the episcopal cause in passing it over in silence.

But how does it appear, from the New Testament, that *James* was bishop of *Jerusalem*? From such considerations, the advocates of prelacy tell us, as the following: 1. That in the synod at

\* See *Lightfoot's Works*, Vol. I. p. 308. and II. p. 133.

† Though *Grotius* was bred a Presbyterian; yet being soured by what he considered as ill treatment from the church of *Holland*, he discovered a strong predilection for episcopacy. When this is considered the declarations above cited, carry with them peculiar force.

*Jerusalem (Acts xv.) he spoke last, and expressed himself thus—Wherefore my sentence is, &c.* 2. That *Peter*, after his release from prison, said to certain persons—*Go show these things unto James and to the brethren. Acts xii. 17.* And 3. That, in *Acts xxi. 17, 18.* it is said—*And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.* On these passages *Dr. Bowden* asks: “Why did *Peter* direct certain things to be communicated particularly to *James*, if he were not the *bishop*? What induced *Paul* and his company to go in unto *James* in particular; and how came all the elders to be with *James*, unless he were the *bishop*? On the supposition that he bore this character every thing is natural; but on any other supposition these facts must appear very strange. I see enough to convince me that he was the head of all the presbyters and congregations in *Jerusalem*. For I find him constantly distinguished from his clergy. He is always mentioned *first*, and the name of no other presbyter, however eminent he may have been, is ever given. He is mentioned with *marked respect* on various occasions,” &c. &c. i. 345—352.

This argument, when stripped of all its decorations, stands thus: *James* was the *last* person who spake in the synod; therefore he was superior to all the apostles and others present! *Peter* requested an account of his release from prison to be sent to *James*; therefore *James* was a *diocesan bishop*! *Paul* and his company went to the house of *James* in *Jerusalem*, and there found the elders convened; therefore *James* was their ecclesiastical governor!

Now, in the name of common sense, what connexion is there in this case, between the premises and the conclusion? Are no clergymen ever treated with “pointed respect,” unless they are *diocesan bishops*? Do no clerical meetings ever take place in the houses of any other class of ministers than *diocesan bishops*? Cannot messages of a public nature be sent to individual ministers of the gospel, without supposing them to be *prelates*? Suppose a number of Presbyterian ministers had an important communication to make to the clergy of a certain city, would it be inconsistent with their doctrine of parity to address this communication to a particular individual, most distinguished for his age, talents, piety,

and influence, to be by him imparted to the rest of his brethren ? Nay, is not this, in all Presbyterian, as well as other countries, the ordinary method of proceeding ? When the clergy of any town or district convene for mutual consultation, does their assembling in the house of some aged and venerable brother in the ministry constitute that brother their *bishop*, in the episcopal sense of the word ? To propose questions of this kind *seriously* is little short of an insult to the understanding of the reader. Do not facts of the very kind related of *James*, happen every day to Presbyterian ministers ? When gentlemen who would be thought to *argue*, and not to *trifle*, condescend to amuse their readers with representations of this kind, under the garb of *reasoning*, it is really difficult to answer them in the language of respect or gravity.

But the *fathers*, it seems, assert that *James* was bishop of *Jerusalem*. Admitting this fact ; and admitting, also, that there were no circumstances tending to invalidate their testimony ; to what does it amount ? Why, simply, that *James* was *one* of the clergy, perhaps the *senior* clergyman of the church of *Jerusalem*, and probably the most conspicuous and eminent of them all. For let it never be forgotten that our episcopal brethren themselves acknowledge, that the title of *bishop* was applied in the apostles' days, and for some time afterwards, to the pastors of single congregations, and of course that this term alone decides nothing in their favour. But let us sift this matter a little. *Hegesippus* is quoted by *Eusebius* as relating, that “ *James*, the brother of our Lord, undertook, together with the apostles, the government of the church of *Jerusalem*. ”\* This is the earliest writer that is brought to testify directly on the subject ; and he declares that *James* presided over the church in *Jerusalem* in conjunction with the other apostles. He says, indeed, a little before, that the bishoprick of *Jerusalem* was given to *James* by the apostles, but when we come to compare the two passages, and to interpret the one by the other, the whole testimony of this writer will be found perfectly equivocal. Some of the later fathers, also, following *Hegesippus*, speak of *James* as bishop of *Jerusalem* ; but do they tell us in what *sense* they employ this title ? That the apostles and primitive Christians sometimes employed it in a sense different from

\* *Eccles. Hist. Lib. II. Cap. 23.*

that which is adopted by our episcopal brethren, is confessed on all hands. And that these early writers, when they speak of *James* as bishop of *Jerusalem*, mean to say that he was a *prelate*, a bishop, in the modern and perverted sense of the term, is what we confidently call in question, and what Dr. *Bowden*, with all his brethren to aid him, cannot prove. I know that the learned professor loses all patience at intimations of this kind ; but it is by no means the first time that a man has been provoked by a demand of *proof*, when he had nothing but *assertion* to produce.

But the most wonderful part of the story is, that Dr. *Bowden* produces *Calvin* as a witness in support of the episcopal dignity of *James*. On this point he speaks in the following terms : “ So evident is it, that *James* was bishop of *Jerusalem*, that even *Calvin* thinks it highly probable that he was governor of that church. ‘ When, says *Calvin*, the question is concerning dignity, it is wonderful *James* should be preferred before *Peter*. Perhaps it was because he was *prefect* of the church of *Jerusalem*.’ In *Galat.* c. ii. v. 9. *Calvin* did not choose to speak plainer ; for that would have been in direct contravention to his ecclesiastical regimen.” 1. p. 346.

The moment I cast my eye on this quotation from *Calvin*, I took for granted that something had been kept back, which, if produced, would turn the tables on the professor. And this accordingly proves to be the case. The passage, as it really stands in *Calvin*, is as follows : “ The apostle speaks of their (*James*, *Cephas*, and *John*,) seeming to be pillars, not by way of contempt, but he repeats a common sentiment. “ Because from this it follows, that what they did, ought not to be lightly rejected. When the question is concerning dignity, it is wonderful that *James* should be preferred to *Peter*. Perhaps this was done because he was *president* of the church of *Jerusalem*. With respect to the word *pillar*, we know, that, in the very nature of things, those who excel others in talents, in prudence, or in other endowments, must also be superior in authority. In the church of God it is a fact, that in proportion as any one is strong in grace in the same proportion is honour due to him. It is ingratitude, nay, it is impiety, not to do homage to the Spirit of God wherever he appears in his gifts. And further, as the people of a church cannot do without a pastor, so each particular assembly of pastors

“ stands in need of some one to be *moderator*. But let it be always understood, that he who is first of all should be as a servant according to *Matthew* 23. 11.”

Where is the testimony from *Calvin* now? The truth is, the whole passage, like tenor of all *Calvin's* writings, is decidedly anti-prelatical. That great reformer, as will be more fully seen hereafter, believed in no authority of one minister over another, as having existed in the primitive church, but a *moderatorship*, either occasional or standing, for the maintenance of order.

This is not the only instance in which Dr. *Bowden* entirely perverts the language of *Calvin*, and represents him as delivering opinions *directly opposite* to those which he really does deliver. Of this, more in a future letter, in which the writings of *Calvin*, so far as they relate to episcopacy, will be particularly considered. In the mean time I cannot forbear to notice a single specimen, so gross and remarkable, that I could scarcely credit the testimony of my own senses when I found it advanced by both my opponents, not only with confidence, but even with sarcastic and reproachful exultation, as a great concession from the reformer of *Geneva* in their favour.

In his commentary on *Titus* 1. 5. *Calvin* speaks largely of the mission of that evangelist to the churches of *Crete*. Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* wish to persuade their readers, that, in these remarks, he fairly gives up the point that *Titus* was a diocesan bishop, or prelate. Accordingly they both represent him as saying—“ Hence we learn that there was not any equality among the ministers of the church, but that one was placed over the rest in authority and counsel.” On this pretended quotation from *Calvin*, Mr. *How* observes, “ Here the divine institution of superior and inferior grades of ministers, is asserted in unqualified terms.” p. 63. Dr. *Bowden* quotes the passage from *Calvin*, exactly in the same manner, and makes precisely the same use of it with Mr. *How*.

You will, no doubt, be filled with astonishment, my brethren, to find that the passage from which these gentlemen profess to make this quotation, is *in fact* as follows: “ *Presbyters*, or *elders*, it is well known, are not so denominated on account of their age, since *young* men are sometimes chosen to this office, as for instance, *Timothy*; but it has ever been customary, in all languages, to apply this title, as a term of honour, to all rulers. And, as

“ we gather from the first epistle to *Timothy* that there were *two*  
 “ *kinds* of elders ; so *here* the context shows that no other than  
 “ *teaching elders* are to be understood ; that is, those who were  
 “ ordained to *teach* ; because the same persons are presently call-  
 “ ed *bishops*. It may be objected that too much power seems to  
 “ be given to *Titus*, when the apostle commands him to appoint  
 “ ministers over all the churches. This, it may be said, is little  
 “ less than kingly power ; for, on this plan, the right of choice is  
 “ taken away from the particular churches, and the right of judging  
 “ in the case from the *college of pastors* ; and this would be to  
 “ profane the *whole* of the sacred discipline of the church. But  
 “ the answer is easy. Every thing was *not* intrusted to the will of  
 “ *Titus* as an *individual*, nor was he allowed to impose such bi-  
 “ shops on the churches, as he pleased : but he was commanded to  
 “ *preside* in the elections as *moderator*, as it is necessary for some  
 “ one to do. This is a mode of speaking exceedingly common.  
 “ Thus a *consul*, or *regent*, or *dictator*, is said to create consuls  
 “ because he convenes assemblies for the purpose of making choice  
 “ of them. So also *Luke* uses the same mode of speaking concern-  
 “ ing *Paul* and *Barnabas* in the *Acts of the Apostles* ; not that  
 “ they *alone* authoritatively appointed pastors over the churches,  
 “ without their being tried or approved ; but they ordained suita-  
 “ ble men, who had been elected or chosen by the people We  
 “ learn also from this place, that there was not then *such* an equali-  
 “ ty among the ministers of the church, but that some one *might*  
 “ *preside* in authority and counsel. This, however, was nothing  
 “ like the tyrannical and unscriptural prelacy which reigns in the  
 “ papacy.\* The plan of the apostles was extremely different.”

Here is not only a passage taken out of its connexion, and interpreted in a sense diametrically opposite to the whole scope and strain of the writer ; but, what is much worse, the passage itself is *mistranslated*, and made to speak a language essentially different from the original. Mr. *How* may possibly plead that he never saw the original ; that he quoted entirely on the authority of some other person. But Dr. *Bowden* cannot make the same plea. He inserts in the margin the very words which he mistranslates and perverts !

\* Here *Calvin* not only represents *prelacy* as a *tyrannical* and *unscriptural* system, but evidently considers it as a part of the corruptions of *popery*.



What are we to think of such a fact? Is Dr. B. unable to translate a plain piece of Latin? or did he design to deceive? He may choose which alternative he pleases.

Dr. *Bowden* thinks me inconsistent with myself in demanding *decided scriptural warrant*, and in maintaining the *sufficiency of Scripture* to direct us on the subject of ecclesiastical order; while, at the same time, I acknowledge that there are no *formal* or *explicit decisions* delivered on this subject, either by Christ or his apostles. But where is the inconsistency here? Do I not maintain that, although the scriptures present no formal or explicit decisions on this subject, yet we find in the New Testament, “a mode of “*expression*, and a number of *facts*, from which we may, without “difficulty, ascertain the outlines of the apostolic plan of church “order?” And is not this “scriptural warrant?” Is it not “*decided*” scriptural warrant, in the estimation of all those who consider the form of the apostolic church as a *model* intended for our imitation? This is perfectly clear to every impartial mind: with others it is vain to reason.

With respect to Dr. *Bowden*’s open declaration, that the scriptures, taken alone, are *not* a sufficient guide on this subject; that we cannot “stir a step” in the controversy, to any purpose, without the aid of the fathers; and even that we cannot establish the genuineness and authenticity of the scriptures themselves, without the writings of the fathers; I can only say, that I consider it as a declaration equally unworthy of his character as a divine, and as a Christian. Has Dr. *Bowden* no evidence that the scriptures are from God, but what the *fathers* say? Then he is exceedingly to be pitied; for his hope rests upon a most precarious foundation. I bless God that much better judges have been of a different opinion. I bless God that the greatest ornaments of his own church, from *Cranmer*, *Latimer*, and *Ridley*, to the present day, have considered the *internal* evidence of the scriptures as the *strongest*, the *best*, and most *precious* of all. The testimony of the fathers, indeed, has its use; but to place it in the point of light in which Dr. *Bowden* does, and to lay so much stress upon it as he avows a disposition to do, is really extraordinary conduct for a protestant minister of the gospel!

The doctrine of our *Confession of Faith* is full and explicit on this subject. “We may be moved and induced by the testimony

“ of the church, to an high and reverend esteem for the Holy Scrip-  
“ ture : And the heavenliness of the *matter*, the efficacy of the *doc-*  
“ *trine*, the majesty of the *style*, the *consent* of all the parts, the  
“ *scope* of the whole, the full *discovery* it makes of the only way  
“ of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable *excellencies*,  
“ and the entire *perfection* thereof, are arguments whereby it doth  
“ abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God. Yet, notwith-  
“ standing, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth,  
“ and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the  
“ Holy Spirit, bearing witness, by and with the word in our hearts.  
“ The whole council of God concerning all things necessary for  
“ his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly  
“ set down in scripture, or, by good and necessary consequence,  
“ may be deduced from scripture ; unto which nothing, at any  
“ time, is to be added, whether by new revelations, or by the spirit  
“ and traditions of men.” chap. 1. This is the doctrine of all the  
reformed churches. The doctrine of the latter clause, is explicitly  
recognized in the VIth article of Dr. *Bowden*’s own church, which,  
in my opinion, he misunderstands and perverts. “ Holy Scripture  
“ containeth all things necessary to salvation ; so that whatsoever  
“ is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be re-  
“ quired of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the  
“ faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” This is  
the rock on which we stand. As long as we can show, and while  
the Bible lasts I am sure we shall always be able to show, that  
Presbyterian government was the apostolic model of church order,  
we may stand unmoved at all opposite testimony, however plausi-  
ble in its nature, and however confidently adduced.

## LETTER IV.

## TESTIMONY IN FAVOUR OF THE OFFICE OF RULING ELDER.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN several passages in my former letters, I adverted to the office of *ruling elder*, and offered some considerations to show that it was instituted in the primitive church. Dr. *Bowden*, perceiving that this position, if maintained, would prove fatal to his cause, has endeavoured, with all his force, to drive me from it, and to persuade his readers, that no such officer was known in the christian church until modern times. As this will hereafter appear to be a question of great importance, not only on account of the office itself, but also on account of its close connexion with the doctrine of ministerial parity, I hope you will pardon me for discussing it more carefully, and at greater length than I was able to do in my former volume.

There is, independent of all historical testimony, strong presumptive evidence that such an office must have been instituted by the apostles. There is a *demand*, little short of absolute *necessity*, that one or more persons, under some name, to perform the duties of *ruling elders*, should be appointed in every well ordered congregation. The minister, whether he be called pastor, bishop, rector, or by whatever title, cannot individually perform all the duties which are included in maintaining government and discipline in the church, as well as ministering in the word and sacraments. He cannot be every where, or know every thing. He must have a number of grave, judicious, and pious persons, who shall assist

him with information and counsel ; whose *official* duty it shall be to aid him in overseeing, regulating, and edifying the church. We can hardly have a better comment on these remarks, than the practice of those churches which reject *ruling elders*. Our *episcopal* brethren reject them ; but they are obliged to have their *vestrymen* and *church-wardens*, who perform the duties belonging to such elders. Our *independent* brethren also reject this class of church officers ; but they too are forced to resort to a *committee*, who attend to the numberless details of parochial duty, which the ministers cannot perform. They can scarcely take a single step without having in *fact*, though not in *name*, precisely such officers as we recognise under the scriptural appellation of *elders*. Now, is it probable, is it credible, that the apostles, acting under the inspiration of Christ, the king and head of the church, should entirely overlook this necessity, and make no provision for it ? It is not credible. We must, then, either suppose that some such officers as those in question were appointed by the apostles, or that means, acknowledged by the practice of all, to be indispensable in conducting the affairs of the church, were forgotten or neglected.

Again ; Dr. *Bowden* acknowledges, and with perfect correctness, that there were such officers in the *Jewish synagogue*. "The *elders*," says he, "of the Jewish synagogue corresponded with the *lay-elders* of your (the Presbyterian) church." *Letters*, Vol. I. 330. But if the Christian church was organized after the model of the synagogue, a fact of which there is the fullest evidence, then we may presume that similar elders were included in this organization. This class of officers, so familiar to every Jew, and so indispensable in his eyes to the maintenance of ecclesiastical government and order, would, by no means, be likely to be left out, when every other was notoriously retained.

But we have better evidence. The New Testament makes express mention of such elders. There is undoubtedly a reference to them in 1 *Timothy*, v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.* Every man of plain good sense, who had never heard of any controversy on the subject, would conclude, on reading this passage, that, when it was written, there were *two* kinds of elders, one whose duty it was to *labour in the word and doctrine*, and another who did not thus labour, but only *ruled* in

the church ; the apostle says, *elders that rule well* are *worthy of double honour*, but ESPECIALLY those who *labour in the word and doctrine*. Now if we suppose that there was only *one kind* of elders then in the church, and that they were *all teachers or labourers in the word*, we must make the inspired writer speak a language utterly unworthy of his character. There was, therefore, a class of elders in the apostolic church, who did not preach, nor administer sacraments, but assisted in *government*. These, by whatever name they may be called, were precisely the same with those officers which we denominate *ruling elders*.

For this construction of the passage, Dr. *Whitaker*, a zealous and learned episcopal divine, and professor of divinity in the university of *Cambridge*, zealously contends. And though his declaration on the subject was quoted in my former letters, I cannot help repeating it here. “By these words,” says he, “the apostle evidently distinguishes between the bishops and the *inspectors* of the church. If all who rule well be worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine, it is plain there were some who did not so labour ; for if all had been of this description, the meaning would have been absurd ; but the word *especially* points out a difference. If I should say, that all who study well at the university are worthy of double honour, *especially they who labour in the study of theology*, I must either mean that *all* do not apply themselves to the study of theology, or I should speak nonsense. Wherefore I confess that to be the most genuine sense by which pastors and teachers are distinguished from those who only govern.” —*Prælect. ap. Didioclav. p. 681*. Equally to our purpose is the opinion of that acute and learned episcopal divine, Dr. *Whitby*, in his note on this passage, which was also in part before quoted. “The elders of the Jews,” says he, “were of two sorts ; 1st. Such as *governed* in the synagogue ; and 2dly. Such as ministered in *reading and expounding* their scriptures and traditions, and from them pronouncing what did bind or loose, or what was forbidden, and what was lawful to be done. For when, partly by their captivity, and partly through increase and traffick, they were dispersed in considerable bodies through divers regions of the world, it was necessary that they should have *governors* or *magistrates*, to keep them in their duty, and judge of criminal

“ causes ; and also *rabbins* to teach them the law, and the traditions of their fathers. The *first* were ordained *ad judicandum*, “ *sed non ad docendum de licitis et vetitis*, i. e. to judge and “ govern, but not to teach : The *second*, *ad docendum*, *sed non ad* “ *judicandum*, i. e. to teach, but not to judge or govern. And “ these the apostle here declares to be the most honourable and “ worthy of the chiefest reward. Accordingly, the apostle, reck- “ oning up the offices God had appointed in the church, places “ *teachers* before *governments*. 1 Corin. XII. 28.”

I am aware that several glosses have been adopted to set aside the testimony of this text in favour of ruling elders. To enumerate and expose them would be a waste of time and patience. It is sufficient to say, that none of them possess any real force, and scarcely any of them even plausibility. And you will hereafter find, that, notwithstanding all these glosses, the text in question has been considered as conclusive in support of our doctrine, by some of the best judges, and by the great body of orthodox Christians, from the apostles to the present day.

The next passage of scripture which affords a warrant for the office of ruling elder is to be found in *Romans* XII. 6, 7, 8. *Having then gifts, differing according to the grace given to us ; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith ; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering ; or he that teacheth, on teaching ; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation : he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity ; HE THAT RULETH, with diligence ; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.* With this passage may be connected another, of similar character, and to be interpreted on the same principles. I mean the following from 1 *Corinthians* XII. 28. *God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, GOVERNMENTS, diversities of tongues.* In both these passages, there is a reference to the different offices and gifts bestowed on the church, by her divine king and head ; in both of them there is a plain designation of an office for *ruling* or *government*, distinct from that of *teaching*, and in both, also, this office evidently has a place assigned to it *below* that of *pastors* and *teachers*. This office, by whatever name it may be called, and however its character may be disguised by



ingenuity, is, to all intents and purposes, the same with that which Presbyterians distinguished by the title of *ruling elder*.

Let us now proceed to inquire what the *fathers* say concerning this class of church officers. And here, for the sake of presenting a connected view of the argument, I shall incorporate a portion of the evidence adduced in my former letters, with such further testimonies as I find to my purpose.

In the *Gesta Purgationis Cæciliani et Felicis*,\* we meet with the following enumeration of church officers, *Presbyteri, Diacones et Seniores*, i. e. "The presbyters, the deacons and elders." And a little after it is added—"Adhibite conclericos et seniores plebis, ecclesiasticos viros, et inquirant diligenter quæ sint istæ dissensiones," i. e. "call the fellow-clergymen, and elders of the people, ecclesiastical men, and let them inquire diligently what are these dissensions." In that assembly, likewise, several letters were produced and read; one addressed *Clero et Senioribus*, i. e. "to the clergyman and the elders;" and another, *Clericis et Senioribus*, i. e. "to the clergymen and the elders." Now I ask, what can this language mean? Here is a class of men, expressly called ecclesiastical men, or church officers, who are styled elders, and yet distinguished from the CLERGY, with whom, at the same time, they meet, and officially transact business. If these be not the elders of whom we are in search, we may give up all the rules of evidence.

*Cyprian*, in his 29th epistle, directed "To his brethren, the presbyters and deacons," expresses himself in the following terms:

"You are to take notice that I have ordained *Saturus* a reader, and the confessor *Optatus*, a subdeacon; whom we had all before agreed to place in the rank and degree next to that of the clergy. Upon *Easter* day, we made one or two trials of *Saturus*, in reading, when we were approving our readers before the teaching presbyters; and then appointed *Optatus* from among the readers, to be a teacher of the hearers." On this passage the Rev. Mr. *Marshall*, the episcopal translator and commentator

\* See these *Gesta*, &c. preserved at the end of *Optatus*, by *Albaspinæus*, his commentator.

of *Cyprian*, remarks—"It is hence, I think, apparent, that all presbyters were not *teachers*, but *assisted the bishop* in other *parts* of his office." And bishop *Fell*, another editor and commentator on *Cyprian*, remarks on the same passage in the following words: "Inter Presbyteros rectores et doctores olim *distinxisse videtur divus Paulus*, 1 *Tim.* v. 17." i. e. "St. Paul appears to have made a distinction, in ancient times, between *teaching* and *ruling elders*, in 1 *Timothy* v. 17." Here two learned episcopal divines explicitly acknowledge the distinction between *teaching* and *ruling elders*, in the primitive church; and one of them, an eminent bishop, not only allows that *Cyprian* referred to this distinction, but also quotes as an authority for it, the principal text which Presbyterians adduce for the same purpose."

*Hilary* (frequently called *Ambrose*) who lived in the 4th century, in his explication of 1 *Timothy* v. 1. has the following passage: "For, indeed, among all nations, old age is honourable. Hence it is that the *synagogue*, and afterwards the *church*, had *elders*, without whose counsel nothing was done in the church; which by what negligence it *grew into disuse* I know not, unless, perhaps, by the *sloth*, or rather by the *pride* of the *teachers*, while they alone wished to appear something." It is scarcely credible to what a miserable expedient Dr. *Bowden* resorts to set aside the force of this testimony. He insists upon it that the pious father only meant to say, that "in former times the *elderly men* of the church used to be consulted, which custom is now laid aside." And again—"He says nothing more than that it was formerly customary to consult the *aged*; no doubt in difficult situations of the church, which frequently occurred in the first three centuries, while persecution lasted." It is difficult to answer suggestions of this kind in grave or respectful language. Can any man in his senses believe that *Hilary* only designed to inform his readers that in the Jewish synagogues there were persons who had attained a considerable *age*; that this is also the case in the Christian church; and that, in difficult cases, these aged persons were consulted? This would have been a sage remark indeed! Was there ever a community, ecclesiastical or civil, which did not include some *aged persons*? Or was there ever a state of society, or an age of the world, in which the practice of consulting the *aged*

had *fallen into disuse*? I am really ashamed of such an attempt, on the part of a grave and “aged” divine, to pervert a passage which could scarcely have been made plainer. *Hilary* says that, “in the *synagogue*, and afterwards in the *church*, there were certain *seniors* or *elders*, without whose counsel nothing was done in the *church*.” If this language does not describe a class of persons, who held an *official* station, and whose *official* duty it was to aid by their counsel in the government of the church, then we may despair of attaching any definite meaning to words. But what decides the question is, as he further states, that in the fourth century, this plan of having *elders*, to assist by their counsel in the government of the church, had chiefly *grown into disuse*. Had the christian church become so corrupt, in a little more than three centuries from its commencement, as to thrust all *aged persons* out of its communion? Or, if the more venerable and aged were suffered to remain, were they never more consulted in cases of difficulty and danger? Besides, if there was no intention to distinguish between *teaching* and *ruling elders*, why is it said that these *seniors* or *elders* were laid aside “on account of the *sloth*, or rather the *pride* of the *teachers*, who alone wished to be something?” I can very well conceive that both the *pride* and the *sloth* of the teaching elders, should render them willing to get rid of a bench of officers, of *equal power* with themselves in the *government* of the church, and able to control their wishes in cases of discipline; but I cannot conceive why either *sloth* or *pride* should prefer consulting the *young*, rather than the *aged*, on the affairs of the church. But you will scarcely pardon me for detaining you so long with the refutation of reasonings so totally unworthy of notice.

*Augustine*, bishop of *Hippo*, who also lived in the fourth century, often refers to this class of officers in his writings. Thus, in his work, *Contra Crescon. lib. iii. cap. 56.* he speaks of *Peregrinus, Presbyter, et Seniores Musticanæ regionis*, i. e. “Peregrine, the *presbyter*, and the *elders* of the Mustacan district.” And again, he addresses one of his epistles to his church at *Hippo*, [*epist. 137,*] *Dilectissimis fratribus, Clero, Senioribus et universæ plebi ecclesiæ Hipponensis.* i. e. “To the beloved brethren, the clergyman, the elders, and all the people of the church at *Hippo*.” There were some *elders*, then, in the days of *Augustine*, who were not clergymen, i. e. *lay-elders*. It would be easy to produce, from

the same writer, a number of other quotations equally to our purpose. But Dr. *Bowden* has rendered this unnecessary, by making an explicit acknowledgment, that *Augustine* repeatedly mentions these *seniors* or *elders* as belonging to other churches as well as his own. And to what expedient do you suppose the Doctor resorts to avoid the consequence of this acknowledgment? Why, he gravely tells us, that he fully believes, with the “learned *Bingham*,” that there were, within the first three or four centuries, a class of aged and respectable men in the church, who were styled *seniors* or *elders*, and whose *official* duty it was to assist in promoting the interests of the church: That some of these were called *Seniores Ecclesiæ*, i. e. *elders of the church*, who were chosen to assist the bishop, with their advice and counsel in the weighty affairs of the church: and that another class were called *Seniores Ecclesiastici*, i. e. *ecclesiastical elders*, who were sometimes entrusted with the utensils, treasures, and outward affairs of the church; but had no share in the administration of discipline. These he compares with the *vestrymen* and *church wardens*, which are generally found in episcopal churches. Vol. I. p. 205—207. Now, I ask, what material difference can any man see between the *seniores Ecclesiæ*, which Dr. *Bowden* acknowledges to have existed in the primitive church, and the *ruling elders* of the Presbyterian church? Our elders are appointed to assist the bishop of each particular church with their counsel, in conducting the spiritual concerns of the church. And is not this precisely the duty which he assigns to the *seniores ecclesiæ* of the primitive church? It is really laughable to find Dr. B. conceding, in substance, all that we desire; and yet, on account of some petty points of difference, which are too frivolous to be noticed, and which do not affect the main question, insisting that there is nothing like our *ruling elders* to be found in primitive times!

Though the readers of my former volume, know that I have no great respect for the authority of the work generally styled *Apostolic Constitutions*; yet many episcopal writers have expressed very high regard for this work, and entire confidence in its authenticity. And, although, when it claims *apostolic* origin, it is to be rejected as an “impudent forgery;” yet there is a high degree of probability that it was composed, by different hands, between the *second* and *fifth* centuries. The following quotation from it will,

therefore, have some weight. "To presbyters also, when they labour in *teaching*, let a double portion be assigned." 11. 28. Here is, obviously, a distinction between *elders* who are employed in *teaching*, and those who are *not* so employed. *How* the others were employed, indeed, is not said; but *teaching* made no part of their official duty. We may take for granted their duty was to assist in the *other* spiritual concerns of the church, viz. in maintaining *good order* and *discipline*. This is precisely the distinction which we make, and which we are confident was made in the primitive church.

It would be easy to produce many more quotations from other early writers, which ascertain the existence of these elders, within the first three or four centuries of the Christian æra. But it is needless. Our opponents acknowledge the fact. Bishop *Taylor*, a great authority with them, among others, explicitly grants,\* that a class of men, under the name of *seniors* or *elders*, distinguished from *clergymen*, are mentioned by a number of early writers, as having existed in the church at an early period, and as holding in it some kind of official station. The only question is, what *kind* of elders they were? These gentlemen exceedingly dislike the idea of their being such *elders* as are found in the Presbyterian church, and assert that they were *not*; but really they offer nothing against it that deserves the name even of a plausible argument.

In my former letters, in exhibiting the testimony usually produced from *Ignatius*, I spoke of the *presbyters* or *elders* so frequently mentioned by that father, in the following terms. "Some of these *elders* were *probably* ordained to the work of the ministry, and of course, empowered to preach and administer ordinances: but this is not certain. They might *all* have been *ruling elders* for ought that appears to the contrary. For in all these epistles, it is no where said that they either preached or dispensed the sacraments. It cannot be shown, then, that *Ignatius*, by his *presbyters* and *presbytery*, or *eldership*, means any thing else than a bench of *ruling elders* in each church." p. 96. This suggestion Dr. *Bowden* not only opposes with much zeal, but he also endeavours to cover it with ridicule, as perfectly frivolous

\* I think this concession is to be found in his *Episcopacy Asserted*. That it is to be found in one of his works, I am certain.

and improbable. So far as he *reasons* on the point, the arguments which he employs are two. The *first* is, that "there is no proof " whatever that there ever was such an order of men in the church " as *ruling elders*." Of the force of this argument you will be able to judge, after reading what has been advanced, and what is yet to come in proof of the apostolic institution of this class of officers. The *second* argument, is that "the epistles of *Ignatius* are totally " inconsistent with such a notion." Now, I think, in direct opposition to Dr. B. that the epistles of *Ignatius* are strongly in favour of this "notion." When that father says, "It is not lawful, without " the bishop, either to baptize, or to celebrate the holy communion," it is evident that *his presbyters* could not have been the same with those who bear that title in modern episcopal churches, who in virtue of their original commission, and without any subsequent permission of the bishop, are empowered, at all times, and in all places, when called upon, to administer both baptism and the Lord's supper. Again; when *Ignatius* says, "Let that eucharist be looked upon " as valid, which is either offered by the *bishop*, or by him to whom " the bishop has given his consent;" Dr. Bowden chooses to take for granted that the person to whom the bishop *might* give his consent, and who, with that consent, *might* dispense the eucharist, was one of the *presbyters* whom *Ignatius* distinguishes from the bishop. But this is not said by *Ignatius*; he might mean the bishop of some neighbouring congregation. There is not a single instance in which the pious father represents his *presbyters* as, *in fact*, preaching or administering sacraments. But even supposing his *presbyters* to be *ruling elders*, and supposing him to mean, that *they*, with the bishop's (or pastor's) leave, *might* administer both sacraments; this would only show that *Ignatius* was in an error, as *Tertullian* was after him, who, in his work *de Baptismo*, after asserting that the administration of baptism was *appropriated* to the office of bishop, does not scruple to say, that even a *layman* may baptize with the bishop's leave. There is, then, nothing in the epistles of *Ignatius* at all inconsistent with the supposition that a *portion*, or even the *whole* of his *presbyters* were *ruling elders*, whose official duty it was to assist the pastor in maintaining *order* and *discipline* in the church.

It is no solid objection to this argument from the fathers, that they



sometimes mention these *elders* after the *deacons*, as if the former were inferior to the latter. Nothing can be inferred from a fact of this kind. *Ignatius*, speaking of the different classes of church officers, expresses himself thus: "Let all reverence the *deacons* as "Jesus Christ; and the *bishop* as the father; and the *presbyters* "as the sanhedrim of God, and college of the apostles." But, notwithstanding the extravagance and impiety of this exhortation, did any one ever suppose that *Ignatius* designed to represent *deacons* as a higher order than *bishops*? In like manner, *Clemens Alexandrinus* speaks of "*presbyters*, *bishops*, and *deacons*;" but who ever dreamed that any inference with respect to the order of authority was to be drawn from this arrangement? Again; Dr. *Bowden* objects, that "*Ignatius* makes the *deacons* a branch of the *ministry*;" but every branch of the ministry had authority to *preach*; "consequently the *deacons*, instead of being inferior to the ruling "*elders*, must have been superior to them." This objection is of as little force as the last. It is notorious that the word *ministry*, both in scripture and the writings of the fathers, is by no means confined to the *clergy*, but is frequently employed to express *any kind of official service* rendered to the church. To produce instances in support of this position is needless. Every well informed divine knows it to be so. When, therefore, the word *ministry*, unaccompanied with any distinctive epithet, is applied either to *elders* or *deacons*, it no more implies a power to preach, or administer sealing ordinances, nor does it throw any more light on the point of order and precedence, than the general word *officer*.

But the truth is, *deacons* being called *ministers* or even *clergymen*, does not militate in the least, against our view of their office. It is well known, as was stated in a former letter, that in the third and fourth centuries, all classes of church officers, even *readers* and *acolyths*, as well as *elders* and *deacons*, were numbered among the *clergy*, that is, as the term obviously imports, those who were *set apart to spiritual or sacred work*.

Having seen that both *scripture* and the *fathers* afford a clear warrant for the office of *ruling elders* in the church; let us next inquire whether the *reformers* and other distinguished witnesses for the truth, in different ages and countries, declared *for* or *against* this office. I know that the authority of the *reformers* is not to

be considered, any more than that of the *fathers*, as a rule either of faith or practice ; but when we recollect the great talents, the profound learning, the fervent piety, and the eminent services of many of those distinguished men, in clearing away the errors of popery, and restoring the faith and order of the primitive church we cannot fail to acknowledge that their opinions and decisions are worthy of high regard. It is worth while, therefore, to inquire what those opinions and decisions were, with respect to the question before us.

*John Paul Perrin*, the celebrated historian of the *Waldenses*, and who was himself one of the ministers of that people, in a number of places recognises the office of *ruling elder* as retained in their churches. He expressly and repeatedly asserts, that the *synods* of the *Waldenses*, long before the time of *Luther*, were composed of *ministers* and *elders*.\*

The same writer tells us, that, in the year 1467, the *Hussites* being engaged in reforming and separating their churches from the church of *Rome*, understood that there were some churches of the ancient *Waldenses* in *Austria*, in which the purity of the gospel was retained, and in which there were many eminent pastors. In order to ascertain the truth of this account, they (the *Hussites*,) sent two of their *ministers* with *two elders* to inquire into, and know what those flocks or congregations were.†

The same historian, in the same work, speaks of “ the *ministers* “ and *elders* of the *Bohemian* churches.‡”

The testimony of *Perrin* is supported by that of *Gillis*, another historian of the *Waldenses*, and also one of their pastors. In the *Confession of Faith* § of that people, inserted at length in the “ addition” to his work, it is declared, (p. 490. Art. 31.) that “ It “ is necessary for the church to have *pastors* to preach God’s word, “ to administer the sacraments, and to watch over the sheep of “ Jesus Christ ; and also *elders* and *deacons*, according to the rules

\* *Hist. of the old Waldenses*, part II. Book II. chap. 4.

† *Ibid.* chap. 10.

‡ *Ibid.* chap. 9.

§ This confession, *Gillis* expressly declares to have been the confession of the ancient, as well as the modern *Waldenses*.

“ of good and holy church discipline, and the *practice of the primitive church.*”

Here, then, is direct and unquestionable testimony that the *Waldenses*, the *Hussites*, and the *Bohemian Brethren*, had *ruling elders* in their churches long before *Calvin* was born. Yet *Calvin*, we are gravely told by *Dr. Bowden* and his friends, was the *inventor* of this class of church officers ! I cannot help thinking that a “ learned man,” and a “ scholar,” (a character which *Dr. B.* often impliedly assumes to himself) ought to have taken care to be better informed before he ventured to make such an assertion.

But we have still more pointed evidence that the churches which ecclesiastical historians have generally distinguished by the title of the *Bohemian Brethren*, and which flourished before the time of *Luther*, bore their testimony in favour of the office of *ruling elder*, by retaining it, amidst all the degeneracy of the times. This fact is attested by *Martin Bucer*, a learned Lutheran divine, whose fame induced archbishop *Cranmer* to invite him to *England*, where he received preferment and patronage, and was held in high estimation. He speaks of it in the following terms :

“ The *Bohemian Brethren*, who published a *confession* of  
 “ their faith in the year 1535, with a preface by *Luther*, and who  
 “ almost alone preserved in the world the *purity of the doctrine*,  
 “ and the *vigour of the discipline* of Christ, observed an excellent  
 “ rule, for which we are compelled to give them credit, and espe-  
 “ cially to praise that God who thus wrought by them ; notwith-  
 “ standing those brethren are preposterously despised by some  
 “ learned men. The rule which they observed was this : besides  
 “ ministers of the word and sacraments, they had, in each church,  
 “ a bench or college of men excelling in gravity and prudence, who  
 “ performed the duties of admonishing and correcting offenders  
 “ composing differences, and judicially deciding in cases of dispute.  
 “ Of this kind of elders, *Hilary (Ambrose)* wrote, when he said,  
 “ Therefore the synagogue, and afterwards the church had elders,  
 “ without whose counsel nothing was done.”\*

\* *Scripta duo Adversaria Latomi*, &c. in Cap. *De Eccles. Authoritat.* p. 159.

The celebrated *Peter Martyr*, a protestant divine of *Italy*, whose high reputation induced *Edward VI.* to invite him into *England*, where he was made professor of divinity at *Oxford*, and canon of *Christ Church*, speaks of *ruling elders* in the following decisive terms : “ The church,” (speaking of the primitive church) “ had its *elders*, or if I may so speak, its *senate*, who consulted “ about things that were for edification for the time being. *Paul* “ describes this kind of ministry, not only in the 12th chapter of “ the epistle to the *Romans*, but also in the first epistle to *Timothy*, “ where he thus writes, *Let the elders that rule well be counted “ worthy of double honour, especially those that labour in the “ word and doctrine.* Which words appear to me to signify, that “ there were then some [elders who taught and preached the word “ of God ; and another class of elders who *did not teach*, but only “ *ruled* in the church. Concerning these *Ambrose* speaks, when “ he expounds this passage in *Timothy*. Nay, he inquires whether “ it was owing to the *pride* or the *sloth* of the sacerdotal order “ that they had *then* almost ceased in the church.”\*

In the *Confession of Saxony*, drawn up by *Melancthon*, in 1551, and subscribed by a large number of Lutheran churches, we find this class of church officers, recognized, and represented as in use in those churches. Speaking of the exercise of discipline, in its various parts, they say—“ That these things may be done orderly, “ *there be also consistories appointed in our churches.*” Of these *consistories*, the principal members, it is well known, were *ruling elders*.

That there were *ruling elders* in the primitive church, is also explicitly granted by archbishop *Whitgift*, a warm and learned friend of diocesan episcopacy. “ I know,” says he, “ that in the “ primitive church, they had in every church *certain seniors*, to “ whom the *government* of the congregation was committed ; but “ *that* was before there was any Christian prince or magistrate “ that openly professed the gospel ; and before there was any “ church by public authority established.” And again, “ Both “ the names and offices of *seniors* were extinguished before “ *Ambrose* his time, as he himself doth testify, writing upon the

\* *P. Martyris Loci Communes.* Class IV. Cap. I. Sect. 2.

“*fifth* of the first epistle to *Timothy*. Indeed, as *Ambrose* saith, “the *synagogue*, and after the church, had *seniors*, without whose counsel nothing was done in the church; but that was *before his time*, and before there was any Christian magistrate, or any church established.”\*

*Szegedin*, a very eminent divine, of *Hungary*, contemporary with *Luther*, also speaks decidedly of the apostolic institution of *ruling elders*. The following passage is sufficient to exhibit his sentiments. “The ancient church had *presbyters* or *elders*, of which the apostle speaks, 1 *Corinth.* 5. 4. And these elders were of *two kinds*. One class of them preached the gospel, administered the sacraments, and governed the church, the same as bishops; for bishops and presbyters are the *same order*. But *another class* of elders consisted of grave and upright men, taken from among the laity, who, together with the preaching elders before mentioned, consulted respecting the affairs of the church, and devoted their labour to admonishing, correcting, and taking care of the flock of Christ.”†

*Hieronymus Kromayer*, a learned Lutheran divine, and professor of divinity in the university of *Leipsic*, who lived in the age immediately following that of *Luther*, bears decided testimony to the apostolic institution of *ruling elders*. “The title of bishop,” says he, “takes its name from a Greek word, which signifies an *over-seer*. This title differs from that of *presbyter*, because the latter is taken from *age*. Of *presbyters* or *elders*, there were formerly *two kinds*, those who *taught*, and those who exercised the office of *rulers* in the church. This is taught in 1 *Timothy* v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine*. The latter were the same as *our ministers*, at present; the former were like the *members of our consistories*. *Jerome* tells us that the practice of choosing one to preside over the rest, was brought in as a remedy for schism; so that a bishop is nothing more than the first presbyter. This doctrine is very offensive to the *papists*; but we have the word of God going before us, as a

\* *Defence against Cartwright*, p. 638. 651.

† *Szedigini Loci Communes*, p. 197. Edit. quint. folio—Basil, 1608.

“light and a guide, and this plainly represents presbyters and bishops as the *same thing*.”\*

The learned *Voetius*, a Dutch divine of great eminence, also contends for the apostolic institution of ruling elders. He speaks of a number of popish writers, as particularly warm and zealous in their opposition to this class of church officers; “Nor is this,” says he, “any wonder, since nothing is more opposite to the papal monarchy, and antichristian tyranny, than is the institution of ruling elders.” *Voetius* is of the opinion that the *church wardens* in the church of *England* are the “vestiges” of these “ruling seniors.”†

*Ursinus*, an eminent German divine, who lived about the same time with *Luther*, in enumerating the officers of the church, as laid down in the word of God, speaks of *ruling elders* and *deacons*. The former he defines to be officers “elected by the voice of the church, to assist in conducting discipline, and to order a variety of necessary matters in the church.” And the latter as officers, “elected by the church, to take care of the poor, and to distribute alms.”‡

After this view of the opinions of some of the most distinguished reformers and others, in favour of the office of *ruling elders*, you will not be surprised to hear, that the great body of the reformed churches adopted, and have always maintained, this class of officers. Instead of being confined, as *Dr. Bowden* and his friends seem to imagine, to *Geneva* and *Scotland*, they were generally introduced, with the reformation, by *Lutherans* as well as *Calvinists*; and are generally retained to the present day, in almost all the protestant churches, excepting that of *England*. We have seen that the *Waldenses*, the *Hussites*, and the *Bohemian brethren* had them long before *Calvin* was born. It is notorious that the reformed churches of *Germany*, *France*, *Holland*, &c. received this class of *elders* early, and expressly represented them in their public *confessions*, as founded on the word of God. And it is a fact equally notorious,

\* *Historia Ecclesiastica* Autore *Hieronymo Kromayero*, D. D. & S. S. T. P. in Acad. Lips. 4to. p. 59.

† *Polit. Eccles. par. ii. Lib. ii. tract. 3. cap. 4. sect. 1. 2.*

‡ *Corpus Doctrinæ. par. iii. p. 721.*



that the *Lutherans*, as well as the *Presbyterians* in our own country, have, at this hour, *lay elders* to assist in the government and discipline of the church. The truth is, that at the period of the reformation, three-fourths of the whole protestant world declared in favour of this class of elders; not merely as *expedient*, but as appointed in the apostolic church, and as necessary to be restored. And to the present time a decided majority of protestants maintain the same opinion and practice.

Many of the objections against *ruling elders*, on which my opponents lay the greatest stress, are entirely groundless, and arise from a total want of acquaintance with the nature and duties of the office. Mr. *How* speaks of them as officers invested with “*mere temporal functions*.” Now this is so far from being the case, that they are not invested with “*temporal functions*” at all. Their office and duties are *purely spiritual*. Dr. *Kemp* represents them as “*unordained*” officers, and expresses much astonishment that I should insist on the *church* having been organized after the model of the *synagogue*, since the *elders* of the synagogue were *ordained*, while he asserts that those of the Presbyterian church are *not*. This gentleman gives us to understand that he was bred a Presbyterian, and speaks of it as one of the advantages which he enjoys in conducting the controversy. But, truly, he discovers, on a variety of occasions, that he left our church without being acquainted with even the elementary principles of its government. To prove this I need not go further than the case under consideration. The fact is, that in every regular Presbyterian church, *ruling elders* are *always ordained*; sometimes with the *imposition of hands*, and sometimes without it. Both methods are in use, in different parts of *Europe*, as well as our own country. But an ordination of some kind is *never omitted* by those who act regularly. Perhaps Dr. *Kemp* would say, that the imposition of hands is *essential* to every ordination; and that, as we ordain our *ruling elders* more frequently *without* this ceremony than with it, he is warranted in representing them generally as “*unordained*.” If so, he is of a different mind from some of the most learned and pious bishops of the church of *England*, who have decided that it is not the formality of laying on hands which constitutes the essence of a

lawful vocation to office in the church; but the *election* and *appointment* to the office.\*

Dr. *Bowden* makes an objection to the office of *ruling elder*, as it exists in the Presbyterian church, which I scarcely expected from so grave a reasoner. It is this : That if the office be such as we represent it, and the scriptural warrant for it such as we are in the habit of quoting, especially if 1 *Tim.* v. 17. be considered as pointing out this class of elders, that then there ought to be a *salary* or some kind of *temporal support* annexed to the office. "But," he adds, "to put a *ruling elder* in this respect, upon a footing with a minister of the word, is altogether preposterous. And I am convinced that your congregations would think it so, were it proposed to allow the *ruling elders* as ample a salary as they do their ministers, or any salary at all. Let the experiment be made universally in your churches, and I will commit myself, that we shall never see the face of a *ruling elder* again." I. 201. But what has this to do with the apostolic institution of the *ruling elder's* office ? Suppose it conceded, that a compensation *ought* to be made to this class of officers, for their services ; and suppose it also conceded, that no such compensation is ever, *in fact*, made ; will it follow that such officers cannot be of divine appointment ? Dr. B. would think it strange reasoning in any man to infer, that, because the *labourer is worthy of his hire*, his clerical commission depends on the payment of his salary ; and that if the one should be withdrawn, the other would cease with it. Did the apostle *Paul* cease to be a minister of Jesus Christ because *he laboured, working with his own hands, that he might not be chargeable to any* ; while, at the same time, he declared, that they who *serve at the altar*, should *live by the altar* ? Nothing

\* When I began these sheets, it was my intention to take notice of all the *material* points in the letters of Dr. *Kemp*, as well as in the writings of my other opponents ; and accordingly I made a kind of engagement to do so, in a former letter. But I had not gone far on this plan, before it became apparent that fulfilling my engagement would be equally useless and irksome. The fact is, that the "rector of *Great Choptank*," has scarcely stated a single objection or argument, but what has been exhibited with more plausibility and strength by Dr. *Bowden*. In refuting the *latter*, therefore, the *former* is, of course, refuted. On this account I beg to be excused in future, for passing over the attack of Dr. *Kemp* in silence.

can be more absurd than to suppose it. Yet this, even conceding the fact for which Dr. B. contends, is the amount of his whole argument.

But the fact cannot be conceded. If Dr. *Bowden* had been as well acquainted with the Presbyterian church, as a discreet man would have taken care to be, before he suffered himself to speak so confidently on the subject, he would have known, that a compensation for their services has often been made to *ruling elders*; and that the nature and amount of this compensation, depend on the circumstances of the *elders* themselves, and of the church which they serve.

But, leaving this collateral inquiry, it is time that we should return to the main question; which shall be resumed in the next letter.

## LETTER V.

## TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN my former volume, while I insisted that the cause in question should be tried at the bar of *scripture* alone, and utterly protested against the jurisdiction of the *fathers*, I still consented to examine their testimony, and devoted two long letters to that examination. In those letters, if more impartial judges, as well as myself, are not deceived, there is abundant proof, that the *fathers* of the **FIRST TWO CENTURIES**, do not contain *a sentence* that can be justly construed in favour of prelacy; but that, on the contrary, their testimony is decisively favourable to Presbyterian parity. Dr. *Bowden*, indeed, is of a different opinion, and speaks with great confidence and asperity in a different strain. But after the specimen which has been given of the manner in which that gentleman can treat demonstrative proof, and even plain declarations of scripture, we need not wonder that, in his eyes, every argument is “frivolous,” and even “contemptible cavilling,” which opposes his episcopal creed.

I have neither the leisure nor the patience again to go over the whole ground of the testimony of the *fathers* on this subject. My only design in the present letter, is, with great brevity, to examine a few of the strictures of Dr. *Bowden*; to confirm some of my statements which have been most confidently and boldly called in question; and to supply some of the defects of my former letters on this part of the controversy.

Suffer me, my brethren, again to remind you of the principle on which we proceed, in this part of our inquiry. If it could be demonstrated from the writings of the fathers, that, in one hundred, or even in fifty years, after the death of the last apostle, the system of diocesan episcopacy had been generally adopted in the church, it would be nothing to the purpose. As long as no traces of this fact could be found in the Bible, but much of a directly opposite nature, we should stand on a secure and immovable foundation. To all reasonings, then, derived from the *fathers*, I answer, with the venerable *Augustine*, who, when pressed with the authority of *Cyprian*, replied, "His writings I hold not to be canonical, but examine them by the canonical writings : And in them, what agreeth with the authority of divine scripture, I accept, with his praise; what agreeth not, I reject with his leave."\*

But our refusal to be tried by the fathers, is founded on *principle*, and not upon any fear of the result of such a trial. We know what their writings contain ; and are sure that our episcopal brethren would lose instead of gaining, by an impartial examination of their testimony. We are perfectly ready, then, to meet Dr. *Bowden*, or any other man, and to hear what he has to say on this department of *evidence*.

In entering on this branch of the controversy in my former letters, I made the following remarks: "Before we proceed to examine the testimony of the *fathers*, let us be careful to recollect precisely, what our episcopal brethren contend for, and what they are bound to prove by these witnesses, in order to make good their claims. When they show us passages in which these early writers merely speak of *bishops*, they seem to imagine that their point is gained : but such passages are, in fact, nothing to their purpose. We do not deny that there were *bishops* in the primitive church : on the contrary, we contend that the word *bishop* was a title given, in apostolic times and long afterwards, to every pastor of a particular congregation. Again, when they quote passages which barely enumerate *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*, as distinct officers in the church, they can derive no assistance even from these; because there were, doubtless, *presbyters*, at that time, as well as

\* *Contra Crescon. II. Cap. 32.*

now, who, though in *full orders* were not invested with a *pastoral charge* ; and who must, therefore, be distinguished from such as were literally *overseers* or *bishops* of particular flocks. Besides, we know that there were *ruling elders* in the primitive church ; a class of presbyters confessed to be inferior to bishops in their ecclesiastical character. In enumerating church officers, then, there was frequently a necessity for making the distinction above stated, without in the least favouring the pretended *superiority of order* among those who laboured in the word and doctrine. No ; the advocates for diocesan episcopacy, if they would derive any support to their cause from the writings of the fathers, must do what they have never yet done. They must produce, from those venerable remains of antiquity, passages which prove, either by direct assertion, or fair inference, that the *bishops* of the primitive church were a *distinct order* of clergy from those *presbyters* who were authorized to preach and administer sacraments, and superior to them ; that these *bishops*, when they were advanced to this superior office, had a new and distinct *ordination* ; that each bishop had under him a number of congregations, with their pastors, whom he governed ; that these bishops were exclusively invested with the right of *ordaining*, and administering the rite of *confirmation* ; and that this kind of episcopacy was considered, by the *whole* primitive church, as an institution of Jesus Christ. When any *one* of these facts is fairly proved, from early antiquity, the friends of Presbyterian church government will feel as if they had something like solid argument to contend with ; but not till then. Now, after having given much close and serious attention to this subject, I can venture to assure you, that in all the authentic writings which have come down to us, of those fathers who lived within the first *two hundred years* after Christ, there is not a *single sentence* which can be considered, by an impartial reader, as affording the least support to *any one* of these positions."

Of these remarks I cannot find that Dr. *Bowden* has taken the least notice. He goes on, falling into the very errors, against which he was thus explicitly warned ; and confidently urging the very arguments which are here shown to be worthless. For instance, when he finds one of the early fathers speaking of a particular person as *bishop* of a certain church, he immediately takes



for granted that a prelatical bishop was intended, and declaims accordingly with all the parade of complete triumph. But this is a gross and most unwarrantable begging of the question. The word *bishop* unquestionably decides nothing in his favour; for Dr. B. and all our opponents, acknowledge, what we know to have been the fact, that this title was applied, in the days of the apostles, and is expressly used by the inspired writers, to designate the pastors of single congregations. Nay, they acknowledge, that for near an hundred years after the apostolic age, the titles of *bishop* and *presbyter* were often interchangeably applied to the same persons. When we attempt to derive an argument from the application of the title *bishop* to the pastors of single churches, which is undoubtedly to be found in scripture, they do not attempt to deny the fact; but insist that the argument from *names* is of no value. But why is it of more value in one case than another? If a *name* decides nothing when found in the *Bible*, it decides nothing when found in the *fathers*. When, therefore, so much is made of the mere insulated title of *bishop*, when found in the early writers, it is mere imposition on vulgar credulity. No inference can be legitimately drawn from it, in the least degree favourable to the episcopal cause.

Again; when Dr. B. finds *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*, mentioned separately, and distinguished from each other, in some of the early fathers, he never fails immediately to rush to the conclusion, that different *orders* or *ranks* of clergy were intended by this distinct enumeration. But this conclusion is no less illogical and groundless than the former. Dr. B. knows, or ought to know, that, on Presbyterian principles, though every *bishop* is a *presbyter*, yet every *presbyter* is not a *bishop*; since no man can, with propriety, according to our system, receive the latter title unless he have the pastoral charge of a congregation. We have satisfactory proof that there were, in the primitive church, clergymen in *full orders*, that is, empowered to preach and administer sacraments, who yet had no pastoral charge; but acted the part of *assistants* or *curates* to the *pastor*, *rector*, or *bishop*. Now in what manner could *such* persons be distinguished from those who were invested with a *pastoral* charge, but by calling the one class *bishops*, and the other *presbyters*? In the Presbyterian Church, we distinguish them in this manner; and in the Church of *England*, they distinguish them

by calling the former *rectors* and the latter *curates*. And with just as much reason might some person, five hundred years hence, assert that *pastors* and *assistant presbyters*, or *rectors* and *curates* were different *orders* of clergy in the eighteenth century; as Dr. *Bowden* can now insist that *bishops* and *presbyters* were different orders in the primitive church. The argument is totally delusive; nor could it have been so often and so gravely repeated, had there not been, on the part of those who have urged it, a miserable deficiency of sounder proof.

But further; I have proved, in the foregoing letter, that there were *ruling*, as well as *teaching* presbyters, or *elders*, in the apostolic church, and for several centuries after the apostolic age. It was, doubtless, necessary, sometimes at least, to speak of *this* class of officers, as distinguished from those who, in the character of *pastors*, preached and administered sacraments. And what method of making this distinction was more convenient than that which we now employ, when we divide our church officers into three general classes, viz. *bishops*, *elders*, and *deacons*? In whatever point of light, then, we view this three-fold distinction, which is sometimes met with in the early writers, it cannot, in the smallest degree, serve the cause of prelacy.

Dr. *Bowden* makes a number of complaints respecting my manner of stating the testimony of the *fathers*. I shall consider, and endeavour to answer these complaints, before I proceed to exhibit such further testimony from those early writers, as appears to me favourable to the doctrine of Presbyterian parity.

He complains, in the first place, that I have *omitted* to state some material testimony from writers of the *second* century. He evidently intimates, that this omission was designed; and that it is a very important one; and undertakes to supply it by bringing forward a few detached scraps from three early writers. These writers are *Dionysius*, *Polycrates*, and *Hegesippus*. To render the charge of omission more serious, the doctor inserts it in a long and solemn list of accusations, to which he endeavours to give as much point as possible, at the close of his work. This charge surprises me, on a variety of accounts. Had I *professed* to give ALL the testimony, which the first two centuries furnish, Dr. B. might justly have complained of *any* omission. But when *no such* profession was made; when the *contrary* was distinctly announced;

when I formally, and more than once stated, that *not the whole*, but the *great body* of the strongest and most important testimony was intended to be brought forward ; and when, from the very nature and size of my work, nothing more than a *selection*, and even *that* a very limited one, was *possible* ; it is more than wonderful that an imputation so serious should be advanced, even if I had omitted to produce passages of real importance. But this is far from being the case. The passages concerning which so formal and heavy a complaint is made, will be found, on examination, to be of no solid value to the advocates of episcopacy. What do these writers say ? Why, *Dionysius*, who lived about the year 170, and whose writings are all lost, excepting a few sentences, preserved by *Eusebius*, is represented by that historian as speaking of several persons as *bishops* of particular churches. *Polycrates*, also, who lived about the year 180, and of whose writings we have nothing except a fragment or two, preserved by a writer who lived long after him, simply says, that *Timothy* was ordained *bishop* of *Ephesus*, by the great *Paul* ; speaks of *Polycarp* as *bishop* of *Smyrna* ; and of himself and six others, as having been *bishops* of *Ephesus*, in succession, after *Timothy*. And *Hegesippus*, contemporary with *Polycrates*, of whom nothing remains, but a few detached sentences, recorded by *Eusebius*, only says that one *Primus* was *bishop* of *Corinth* ; that *Anicetus*, *Soter*, and *Eleutherius* were successively *bishops* of *Rome* ; and that *James* was constituted *bishop* of *Jerusalem*, because he was the Lord's near kinsman. But what is the amount of this testimony ? It is really too frivolous to be treated with respect. What Presbyterian ever doubted that there were *bishops*, in the primitive church ; not only in *Jerusalem*, *Ephesus*, *Corinth*, and *Rome*, but also in every other city or town on the globe, where a congregation of Christians was organized ? And when it has not only been demonstrated, but also acknowledged by our opponents, that the word *bishop* was applied, in the days of the apostles, and for a considerable time afterwards, to those who were not prelates, it is really something worse than trifling, still to insist upon an argument founded upon an equivocal title, and only calculated to insult the discerning, or to deceive the unwary.

But why did Dr. *Bowden* mention the testimony of *three* fathers only, as having been omitted ? Why did he not enumerate *Bachyls* of *Corinth*, *Serapion*, and others, in the second century, who

are represented as having left writings, in which, though now lost, the word *bishop* was found? The truth is, I considered all this testimony as vague and irrelevant; and am still confident, that in the *selection* of testimony from the fathers of the first two centuries, which I professed to make, I did full justice to the episcopal side of the question. There was no passage omitted which can be considered as speaking *more* forcibly in their favour, than several which were exhibited; nor any which wear, in my opinion, so plausible an aspect, as some which I candidly brought forward. Nor can I believe that Dr. *Bowden* would have complained so loudly of the omission of testimony, had he not felt that every scrap which bears the most distant appearance of plausibility, is necessary to assist his cause.

With respect to another charge of Dr. *Bowden*, that I have omitted to produce certain testimony from some of the fathers of the *third* and *fourth* centuries, it is scarcely worthy of an answer. In entering on this part of the controversy in my former letters, I made the following explicit declaration:

“In examining the writings of the fathers, I shall admit only the  
 “testimony of those who wrote within the FIRST TWO CENTURIES.  
 “Immediately after this period so many corruptions began to creep  
 “into the church; so many of the most respectable Christian writers  
 “are known to have been heterodox in their opinions; so much  
 “evidence appears, that even before the commencement of the  
 “third century, the papacy began to exhibit its pretensions; and  
 “such multiplied proofs of wide spreading degeneracy crowd into  
 “view, that the testimony of every subsequent writer is to be received  
 “with suspicion. Besides, if diocesan episcopacy existed,  
 “and were of the fundamental importance that our episcopal brethren  
 “make it to be, we may surely expect to find some reference  
 “to it in the records of *two hundred years*; and especially when  
 “we consider that those were years of the greatest simplicity and  
 “purity ever known to the church.” After such a declaration, who would have expected to find it imputed to me, as an unfair proceeding, that I had not exhibited the *whole* testimony of the fathers of the *third* and *fourth* centuries; especially after conceding, in the most unequivocal manner, that clerical impurity had begun to appear in the *third*, and was established in the *fourth* century?

But I forbear. To take up your time in replying to cavils of this nature, even if one had patience enough for the purpose, would be equally irksome and useless.

In my former letters, I omitted to examine the testimony of the *Apostolical Canons*, and the *Apostolical Constitutions*; and assigned as a reason for the omission that I considered them as spurious and unworthy of credit. With this omission, and the reason for it, Dr. *Bowden* is much dissatisfied. He does not, indeed, attempt to establish the authenticity of the *Apostolical Constitutions*; but for that of the *Canons* he contends with ardent zeal. He charges me with having "vilified" them; and thinks, if I had ever read *Beveridge's* defence of them, I should have been more "cautious" and "modest." I beg leave to inform my "learned" antagonist, that I am not an entire stranger to *Beveridge's* work, and that after weighing his arguments as impartially as I can, I am still so "incautious" and "immodest" as to believe that these *Canons* are not what they profess to be. *Beveridge* himself does not contend that they were made by the *apostles*; and Dr. *Bowden* acknowledges the same thing. They are not, therefore, *Apostolical Canons*. The learned *Daillé* is of the opinion that they were not compiled till the *fifth* century; *Blondel* dates their compilation towards the close of the *third* century; and even *Beveridge* himself, their most partial defender, supposes them to be the decrees of synods in the *second* and *third* centuries, collected at different times, and by different hands. Now, so far as they belong to the *third* century, the line which I have drawn excludes them from my notice. When Dr. *Bowden* can decide *which* of them were formed in the *second* century, and which of them are of a later date, I shall consider myself as bound by my plan to examine the former class, and not before.

But, if I do not mistake, some imputations may be brought against both the "caution" and the "modesty" of Dr. *Bowden* himself, in this business. It would be easy to produce a number of episcopal writers, of the highest reputation for talents and learning, who have, without ceremony, pronounced the *Apostolical Canons*, as well as the *Apostolical Constitutions*, to be destitute of authenticity. Dr. B. certainly could not have been acquainted with these writers, of his own church; as it is not supposable that he

would set up *his* judgment in opposition to theirs. Among others Bishop *Taylor*, who was at least as competent a judge as Dr. B. speaks of the writings in question in the following language :

“ Even of the fifty (*canons*) which are most respected, it is evident that there are *some things so mixed* with them, and no mark of difference left, that the credit of *all* is *much impaired*; insomuch that *Isidore*, of *Seville*, says, ‘ they were *apocryphal*, made by heretics, and published under the title apostolical ; but neither the *fathers* nor the church of *Rome* did give assent to them.’ ”\*

Dr. *Bowden* not only charges me with *omitting* to state the testimony of some fathers, but also with *misrepresenting* that of others. Most of the instances which he produces in support of this charge, do not appear to me entitled to any reply. Of a few, however, it may be proper to take a cursory notice.

He asserts that I have misrepresented the testimony of *Ignatius* ; but wherein does this misrepresentation consist ? Dr. *Bowden* will not dare to deny that *my* quotations from that father are larger and more numerous than *his own* ; nor will he dare to deny, that I have selected, and fairly exhibited, those very quotations which high churchmen have generally adduced as, in their view, most decisive in favour of prelacy. In what respect, then, have I been guilty of *misrepresentation* ? He will probably reply that *my comments* on the testimony of *Ignatius* are unfair. The best answer to this charge will be a dispassionate review of those comments ; and I will venture to say, that no one who takes this trouble, will find any thing in them but what is natural, probable, and abundantly warranted by the strain of the testimony itself.

*Ignatius*, indeed, speaks much of bishops. But I have shown that this title furnishes no ground of argument in favour of prelacy. He speaks much, too, of *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*, as distinguished from each other : but I have also clearly shown that this distinction is perfectly consistent with our doctrine of ministerial parity ; and that to represent it in a different light, is a mere begging of the question in dispute. But I will go further, and again venture, with greater confidence than ever, to repeat my former assertion, that the *bishop* so often mentioned by *Ignatius* is evidently a *parochial* and not a *diocesan* bishop. If the *bishop* to whom this father refers, was the only person, in each church, em-

\* *Liberty of prophesying*, Sect. 5. Art. 9.



powered to *baptize*, and administer the *Lord's supper* ; if no *marriage* could take place without his knowledge and consent ; if it was considered as his duty to be *personally acquainted* with all his flock, to take notice with his own eye of those who were *present* and *absent* at the time of public worship, to attend to the *widows* and the *poor* of his congregation, to seek out all *by name*, and not to overlook even the *men* and *maid-servants* of the flock committed to his charge ; then, surely, no man in his senses can suppose that this officer could have been any other than a *parochial* bishop or *pastor*. I know that Dr. *Bowden* is of the opinion, and endeavours to show, that the *duties* which I have stated, are *not* all represented by *Ignatius* as belonging to his bishop. I do not consider it as worth while to take up your time in discussing this point. Let any one look over the epistles of *Ignatius*, or if he cannot have access to them, let him look over the extracts which I have given in my former letters, including those on which Dr. B. lays the greatest stress, and then let him say whether it is possible to reconcile the whole strain and language of that venerable father with any other than *parochial* or *Presbyterian* episcopacy ? For my part, though Dr. B. very delicately loads this suggestion with the terms “ nonsense,” “ contemptible puerility,” &c. I am persuaded every impartial reader will say, it is both sounder sense, and better logic, than this gentleman, with all his “ scholar-like” management, has drawn from the testimony of the pious martyr. In short, Dr. *Bowden* may fume and fret as long and as much as he pleases, but, after all that he has said, or can say, nothing intelligible can be made of the *bishop*, *presbyters*, and *deacons* of that father, materially different from the *pastor*, *elders*, and *deacons* of every regularly organized Presbyterian church.

Dr. *Bowden* supposes that Presbyterians consider the *bishop* so often mentioned by *Ignatius*, in no other light than as the *moderator* of some ecclesiastical assembly. Assuming this as our opinion, he attempts to pour ridicule upon it, by substituting the word *moderator* for *bishop*, and endeavouring to show that the supposition is utterly inconsistent with the representation given of the duties of this officer. When a man does not *comprehend* the subject which he attempts to ridicule, he is extremely apt to draw upon himself the laughter which he thought to turn against others. This is the unfortunate situation of Dr. *Bowden*. He seizes upon a detached fragment of Presbyterian doctrine ; and, imagining that

he sees and understands the whole system, he thinks to involve that system, in the absurdity which he makes to recoil upon his own.

Dr. Bowden ought to know, that *bishop* and *moderator* are not convertible terms ; and that they are not so considered by Presbyterians. We suppose, and believe it is easy to prove, that the word *bishop*, in the apostolic age, signified, simply, the *pastor* or *overseer* of a flock, or single congregation. Accordingly we conclude that there were several organized churches both at *Ephesus* and *Philippi*, in the days of the apostles, because the scriptures expressly tell us that, at that time, there were *several bishops* in both those cities. We have shown, too, that each church, in the days of the apostles, was commonly furnished with a bench of *ruling elders*, and *deacons*. We have also reason to believe, that, in large congregations, there were several elders who, as assistants, laboured in the word and doctrine. The pastor, that is the presbyter who was particularly invested with the pastoral charge, was called *the bishop* of that church ; and when the elders came together, and sat as a *church session*, or ecclesiastical court, he, of course, presided as their *moderator*. It is easy to perceive, however, that this *bishop* was equally such, both in *fact*, and in *name*, whether he was ever called to act as *moderator* or not. The mere circumstance of his having no bench of elders, and no *church session* in which to preside, did not destroy or affect his pastoral character. We maintain, that there was no other species of *bishop*, during the time of the apostles, than such as has been described, that is, the pastor of a single flock or church.

But we suppose that, very early after the apostle's days, when the congregations, and, of course, the pastors, in large cities, became numerous, and frequently convened for the transaction of ecclesiastical business, that the custom was adopted of choosing one person, generally the most aged and venerable of the number, to act as *president*, *chairman*, or *moderator*, and that, after a while, the title of *bishop* was, by way of eminence conferred on him ; and, in process of time, gradually *appropriated* to him. Hence it is a notorious fact, which our episcopal brethren do not pretend to deny, that bishops, in the *second* and *third* centuries, were frequently distinguished by the titles, *PRESIDENT*, *CHAIRMAN*, and the *person who filled the FIRST SEAT in the presbytery*. But this

no more implied, nor, at that time, was considered as implying, a superiority of *rank* or *order*, on the part of the *chairman*, than the office of *moderator* in one of our *presbyteries* or *synods*, clothes the pastor who fills it with a permanent superiority of order over his brethren.

In some cities, however, it is evident that a different plan was pursued. When the converts to the Christian faith became so numerous, that they were no longer able to worship in one assembly; and especially when a number of persons from the neighbouring villages joined the city church, some of these members began to lay plans for forming separate and smaller congregations nearer home. To this the bishop consented, on condition that the little worshipping societies thus formed should consider themselves as still under his pastoral care, as amenable to the parent church, and as bound to obey him as their spiritual guide. When the *pastor* agreed to this arrangement, it was generally understood, that there should be but one *communion table*, and one *baptistery* in the city or parish; and, of course, that when the members of these neighbouring societies wished to receive either of the sacraments, they were to attend at the parent church, and receive them from the hands of the *pastor* or *bishop* himself. The ordinary services of public worship on the Lord's day, were performed at little *oratories*, or *chapels of ease*, planted at different and convenient places within the parish; and on these, it was considered as sufficient for the *assistant* preachers, or *curates*, to attend. But at special seasons, at least *once* or *twice* in the year, every church member was held under obligations to attend the mother church, and commune with the pastor himself. This was laying the foundation for the authority of one bishop or pastor over several distinctly organized congregations, which, not long afterwards, was claimed and yielded.

We have specimens of a similar arrangement in modern times. Fifteen years ago all the episcopal inhabitants of the city of *New York*, were under the pastoral care of the *rector* of *Trinity Church*. In the beginning, that *rector* had only one church under his inspection, and was himself the only preacher in it. But when a *second* and a *third* were built, and a large congregation established in each, it was still thought proper to retain the whole under the care of one *pastor* with several *assistants*; so that when there

were three episcopal churches, and probably from *eight to ten thousand* Episcopalians in the city, there was still but one *rector* over the whole, with a number of *assistant clergymen*, who were considered, and treated as officially subordinate to him. Yet these *assistant clergymen* had, in reality, the same ordination with their *rector* ; were as perfectly qualified as himself, to take a *rectorate* or *pastoral charge*, without any new ordination ; and were of the same ecclesiastical order, although, as long as they retained this relation to him, they were *his clergy*, and were under his control in all their professional services. The whole city was, to all intents and purposes, *one parish*, and the *rector* its ecclesiastical head.

That an arrangement substantially of this kind was frequent in the *second* and *third* centuries, is not merely a supposition of mine ; but is asserted by a number of the best informed and most able advocates of prelacy. The learned *Mede*, a zealous episcopal divine, in his *Discourse on Churches*, p. 48. says, “ Nay, more  
“ than this, it should seem that in those first times, before dioceses  
“ were divided into those lesser and subordinate churches, which  
“ we now call parishes, and presbyters assigned to them, they had  
“ only *one altar* to a church, taking church for the company or  
“ corporation of the faithful, united under one *bishop* or *pastor* ;  
“ and that was in the city or place where the bishop had his see  
“ and residence. Unless this were so, whence came it else, that a  
“ schismatical bishop was said, *constituere* or *collocare aliud al-*  
“ *tare* ? And that a *bishop* and an *altar* are made correlatives ?”

The same fact is asserted by Bishop *Stillingfleet*, in his *sermon against separation*. “ Though, when the churches increased,” says he, “ the *occasional meetings* were frequent in several  
“ places ; yet still there was but *one church* ; and *one altar*, and  
“ *one baptistery*, and *one bishop*, with many presbyters assisting  
“ him. Which, is so plain, in antiquity, as to the churches plant-  
“ ed by the apostles themselves, that none but a great stranger to  
“ the history of the church can call it in question. ’Tis true,  
“ after some time, in the greater cities, they had distinct places  
“ allotted, and presbyters fixed among them. And such *allotments*  
“ were called *Tituli* at *Rome*, and *Lauræ* at *Alexandria*, and  
“ *Parishes* in other places. But these were never thought, then, to  
“ be *new churches*, or to have any independent government in

“ themselves, but were all in subjection to the *bishop* and his  
 “ college of *presbyters* ; of which multitudes of examples might be  
 “ brought from the most authentic testimonies of antiquity, if a  
 “ thing so evident needed any proof at all. And yet this distri-  
 “ bution (into distinct *Tituli*) even in cities, was looked on as so  
 “ uncommon in those elder times, that *Epiphanius* takes notice of  
 “ it as an *extraordinary* thing at *Alexandria* ; and, therefore, it is  
 “ probably supposed that there was no such thing in all the cities  
 “ of *Crete* in his time.”

Accordingly *Ignatius*, in his epistle to the *Philadelphians* declares, “ There is, to every church, *one altar*, and *one bishop*.” And he elsewhere represents it as a characteristic of the *unity* of a church, that there is one *altar*, and one *bishop* in each. *Cyprian*, in like manner, repeatedly speaks of setting up a *new altar*, or *communion table* within the parish or diocese of a pastor, without his leave, as irregular and schismatical. These facts perfectly agree with the declaration made by several of the fathers, that administering the ordinance of *baptism* was considered as the *appropriate* work of the bishop within the bounds of his church ; and also that the members of each church received the *Lord's supper* from no other hands than those of their *bishop*. Accordingly Dr. *Hammond*, a zealous friend of prelacy, expressly affirms, that in the days of *Tertullian*, all Christians received the *eucharist* from no other than the *bishop's* hands ;\* and Dr. *Heylin*, an Episcopalian of still higher tone, distinctly acknowledges the same fact.† To suppose that these representations are consistent with the episcopal arrangement, in which a number of distinct and independent congregations, each supplied with a pastor or *rector*, are all under the government of a prelate, in the habit of visiting each congregation once or twice every year, is manifestly absurd. They can only be reconciled with a system in which, as in the Presbyterian church, the *pastor* or *bishop* is made overseer of a single flock or church ; is ordinarily the sole dispenser of the word and ordinances in that church ; and must be consulted, and his leave directly or indirectly obtained, when others attempt to dispense them within his parish.

\* *Dissertat.* iii. *Cap.* vii. § 5.

† *History of Episcopacy*, Part ii. p. 96, 97.

We are now prepared to determine what kind of bishop *Ignatius* was, and in what sense the other contemporary pastors were addressed by that father under this title. If we suppose that in each of the cities of *Antioch*, *Smyrna*, &c. there was only a *single congregation* of Christians, then the case is plain. Those venerable ministers were only pastors or bishops of single flocks, in perfect conformity with the Presbyterian model. But let us suppose that there were several large worshipping assemblies of Christians in each of those cities. It is true, the epistles of *Ignatius* do not give the least hint, that this *was* the case; and we only infer it, from probable evidence, derived from other sources, without being able, on either side, to establish or to disprove the fact. Let it be admitted, however, that there were several worshipping assemblies in each of these cities; still this fact proves nothing in favour of prelacy. Their pastors might each have had several congregations under their care, and several clergymen to assist them, without being prelates, any more than the *rector of Trinity Church* thirty years ago was a prelate. But we may go even further. Suppose it abundantly proved, that in the days of *Ignatius*, there were established in each of the cities of *Antioch*, *Smyrna*, &c. a number of separate and distinctly organized congregations, and that each was under the care of a pastor. And suppose it further proved that, notwithstanding this *Ignatius* was, by way of eminence styled *bishop of Antioch*, and *Polycarp* bishop of *Smyrna*; still the fact, even if established, would be perfectly consistent with Presbyterian parity. We have only to suppose these men were *moderators* of the respective *presbyteries* of those cities, and all is natural, intelligible, and probable. In this case, we may consider all the instructions concerning *bishops* and their *flocks*, which the *epistles* in question contain, as merely conveyed through the medium of the senior or presiding pastor, to his colleagues, and as intended equally for all. Thus it appears that the epistles of *Ignatius* do not, on any supposition, contain a sentence which can be legitimately construed in favour of prelacy; and that all the confidence of my opponents in asserting the contrary, is groundless and futile.

Dr. *Bowden* is equally positive, that I have misrepresented the testimony of *Irenæus*. Here again I beg of you impartially to review the extracts which I gave from the writings of that father



and my comments upon them, together with all that Dr. B. has said on the subject ; and then to decide between us. It is plain, and Dr. B. does not deny, that *Irenæus* speaks of certain persons, by name, as *presbyters*, and represents them as *successors* of the *apostles*. It is equally plain, that he speaks of the *same* persons, in another place, as *bishops*, and under that title also, represents them as having *the succession* from the apostles. He does this, not *once* merely, but *several* times, and with as much point, and apparent care, as if his grand object had been to show that *presbyters* and *bishops* were then the same. The argument arising from this language is obviously in our favour. Dr. *Bowden*, indeed, thinks otherwise, and makes an attempt to answer it ; but his embarrassment, and inability to accomplish his purpose, must be apparent to every reader.

Dr. *Bowden* lays much stress on a passage in *Irenæus*, in which he speaks of these persons, whom he alternately calls *bishops* and *presbyters*, as succeeding the apostles in their *mastership*. What is *mastership* ? Simply *official authority*. And what has this to do with prelacy ? Nothing. Suppose a Presbyterian were to say, “ The *bishops* of our church are the successors of the apostles, and “ succeed to as much of their *authority* or *mastership*, as was intended to be perpetual in the church : ” would any intelligent person who heard him, imagine that he was speaking a language either favourable to diocesan episcopacy, or hostile to his own principles ? Certainly not. And yet this language coincides, in every essential point, with that of *Irenæus*.—Dr. *Bowden* seems not to understand, or perpetually to forget, that we consider our pastors or bishops as the true and proper successors of the apostles, so far as their office was ordinary and intended to be transmitted ; and that we consider them as invested with the highest authority, or (if he prefer the word,) *mastership* in the church.

But that part of the testimony of *Irenæus* to which Dr. *Bowden* attaches the greatest importance, is, that he represents the *succession* in the church of *Rome* as flowing through *single* ministers, whom he styles bishops ; although we have reason to believe that there were many presbyters connected with the church in that city. Now, if there were *a number* of bishops, in our sense of the word, in *Rome*, how, it is asked, could *Irenæus* trace the line of succession through *single* persons only ? In other words, why does he

single out *Linus*, *Anacletus*, *Clemens*, and *Evaristus*, as successively bishops of *Rome*, when, according to our doctrine, there were pretty certainly, a number of contemporary ministers in that church, of the *same rank* with those whose names are mentioned? I answer, this statement of *Irenæus* is *not to be relied on*; and if it *were*, it is nothing to the purpose.

I say, the statement of this father, respecting the succession in the church of *Rome*, is *not to be relied upon*. He says that *Anacletus* was before *Clemens*, and next to *Linus*. *Tertullian* and several others assure us that *Clemens* was next to *Peter*, and, of course, before *Anacletus*. *Epiphanius* and *Optatus* say that *Anacletus* and *Cletus* were before *Clemens*. While *Jerome*, *Augustine*, *Damasus*, and others, assert that *Anacletus*, *Cletus*, and *Linus*, were all antecedent to *Clemens*. Here is perfect confusion. It is evident that these writers were guided by vague and contradictory traditions, and knew nothing of the matter. The probability, from the very face of the story, is that the bishops or pastors of whom they speak, did not all sit in the pastoral chair of *Rome* singly, and in succession, but several of them together. Accordingly, *Damasus*, in his work *De Gestis Pontificum*, hath these words: "St. Peter ordained two bishops, *Linus* and *Cletus*, who, in their own persons, should perform all sacred offices to the Roman people." It is true these words are not to be found in the *printed* editions of that work; but they are in *all* the *manuscript* copies, and so they are cited by *Marianus Scotus*, as the learned *Vossius* assures us; who adds, "That the succession of bishops at *Rome*, in a single person, began under *Evaristus*. Before his time two or three sat together."\* The learned *Junius*, also, an illustrious reformer of *Holland*, nearly contemporary with *Luther*, speaking of the contradictory testimony of the fathers, respecting the succession of the first bishops or pastors of *Rome*, delivers the following decisive opinion. "These, or some of these, were presbyters or bishops of *Rome*, at the same time, ruling the church in common. But the following writers, fancying to themselves such bishops as had then obtained in the church, fell into these snares of tradition, because they supposed, according to the custom of their own

\* OWEN'S *History of Ordination*, Chap. I. Prop. vii.

“times, that there could be but one bishop in one church at the same time.”\*

But, granting that there is no mistake in the testimony of *Irenæus*; granting that it is all authentic and worthy of confidence; it proves nothing inconsistent with the doctrine of Presbyterian parity. What though the pious father represents a succession of single persons as styled *bishops* in the church of *Rome*? They might have been the *senior pastors* of that city, or they might have been the successive *moderators* of the city presbytery. Or a few names might have been selected out of a number of contemporary ministers, of the same ecclesiastical order, on account of their superior age, talents, or weight of character. In short, a variety of suppositions may be made concerning them, all equally reconcilable with Presbyterian principles, and with the language of *Irenæus*; but none of them giving the least countenance to the prelatical doctrine of different orders of clergy.

But the most extraordinary charge of Dr. B. is that I have misrepresented and perverted the testimony of *Jerome*. He insists that *Jerome* says nothing, which can be justly construed as intimating that ministerial parity existed in the apostolic church; but much of a directly opposite import. With a man who can persist in assertions of this kind, in the face of evidence so clear and indubitable, it is vain to reason. Let me request you, brethren, again, to review the long and faithful extracts from the writings of this father, which are contained in the *fifth* of my former letters, and then decide whether it is possible for sophistry itself to set aside testimony so full and positive. What does *Jerome* say? Instead of speaking “obscurely,” or “doubtfully,” as Dr. B. alleges, his declarations on this point are absolutely among the most express and unequivocal passages to be found on any subject, in all antiquity! He says, in so many words, that in the beginning, “Not only in *his* opinion, but also in that of *scripture*, bishop and presbyter were *the same*, the one being the name of *age*, the other of *office*.”—And again, among the *ancients*, presbyters “and bishops were *the same*.”—And again, “A presbyter is the same as a bishop; and before there were, by the devil’s influ-

\* JUNII *Controv.* Lib ii. Cap. 5. Not. 18.

“ence, parties in religion, the churches were governed by the “common council of presbyters.” To prove this, he formally quotes passages from the *Acts of the Apostles*, from the epistle to the *Philippians*, from the epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, from the first epistle of *Peter*, and from the second and third epistles of *John* :—‘The very passages which are generally quoted by Presbyterians in favour of their doctrine. *Jerome* further declares that *afterwards* the practice was introduced of placing one of the presbyters above the rest, as a remedy against schism. He declares, expressly, that this practice was brought in (*paulatim*) *by little and little*.” He asserts, with equal explicitness, that “bishops are above presbyters, more by the *custom of the church*, than by the *appointment of Christ*.” And finally, he asserts that this *departure* from the *primitive model*, owed its origin to the decay of religion, and especially to the ambition of ministers. It commenced “When every one began to think that those whom he baptized were rather *his* than *Christ’s*.” I appeal to your candour, my brethren, whether any thing can be plainer or more decisive than this language? I appeal to your candour, whether the man who is capable of saying that these are “obscure” and “doubtful” passages, can be safely trusted either as a discerning or an impartial judge.

Dr. *Bowden*, indeed, alleges, that these “obscure” passages from *Jerome* are more than counterbalanced by *others*, in which he avowedly maintains the apostolical origin of prelacy. But where are such passages to be found in that father? Dr. B. has produced none of them; and until he does produce them, I must be excused for doubting their existence. He has brought forward, it is true, *seven* quotations, each of which he tells us is clear and pointed. But no person, it is presumed, excepting Dr. B. himself, can see the “clearness,” or the “point” of any one of the number. *Jerome*, it seems, asserts, that “without the bishop’s command, “neither presbyter nor deacon has a right to baptize.” He observes, “That the scriptures give the name of *Princes* to those “who should be *bishops* of the church.” He styles *Polycarp*, *prince of Asia* ;\* and asserts that he was “made bishop of

\* For the passage in which *Jerome* represents *Polycarp* as *prince of all Asia*, and bishop of *Smyrna*, Dr. *Bowden* refers to the work *De Scriptor*.

*Smyrna* by *St. John* himself." Speaking of certain differences between the *catholic* churches, and those of the *Montanists*, he says, "With us, the bishops hold the place of the apostles; with them the bishop holds the third place." Again, he says, it is "the custom of the church, for *bishops* to go and invoke the Holy Spirit by imposition of hands, on such as were baptized by *presbyters* and *deacons*, in villages and places remote from the mother church. Do you ask, where this is written? In the Acts of the Apostles." In another place he says, "The apostles were thy fathers because they begat thee; but now that they have left the world, thou hast in their stead, their sons, the bishops."\* And finally, in his Epistle to *Evagrius*, he remarks, "That we may know that the apostolic traditions were taken from the Old Testament, that which *Aaron* and his sons, and the *Levites*, were in the temple, let the bishops, presbyters, and deacons, claim to themselves in the church." These are all the passages which *Dr. Bowden* cites with so much exultation, and which he considers as pointedly asserting the apostolic institution of prelacy. But I will venture to pronounce, that there is not one of these passages, which can be considered by any impartial reader, as furnishing the least solid ground for such a conclusion; and only one of the whole number which bears even the semblance of an argument to this effect.

When *Jerome* says that bishops come in the place of apostles, and hold the first place among the officers of the church; when he remarks, that the apostles having left the world, we have the bishops in their place; and when he asserts that *Polycarp* was bishop of *Smyrna*; he speaks a language in which every Presbyterian is ready to join him. Is it possible that *Dr. Bowden* is so utterly unacquainted with our principles, as not to know, that we consider our *bishops* or *pastors*, as the true and proper successors of the Apostles; and as holding the highest official station in the Church?

*Eccles.* Has the doctor yet to learn that this work is acknowledged by the ablest episcopal writers to be interpolated and suspicious; and particularly, that they have acknowledged, as among the interpolations, several passages in which persons are mentioned as bishops of particular churches in the apostolic age.

\* This quotation also *Dr. Bowden* takes from the adulterated work, *De Script. Eccles.*

Did he ever meet with a Presbyterian who doubted that *Polycarp* had a pastoral charge, or, in other words, was a *bishop* in *Smyrna*? Again, when *Jerome* says, "Without the *bishop's* command, "neither presbyter nor deacon has a right to baptize," he evidently meant to assert that this was the case in the *fourth* century, when he lived. But did any Presbyterian ever deny that in the days of *Jerome*, prelacy was established? The criticism which Dr. B. makes on the word *right* (*jus*) which occurs in this passage, I pass over as unworthy of his good sense, and as undeserving of reply. Further, when *Jerome* declares, that the Scriptures give the name of *princes* to bishops, and when he asserts that *Polycarp* was *prince of all Asia*, he says what our Episcopal brethren themselves acknowledge to be falsehoods. They know that no such official title is, any where in Scripture, given to bishops; and they acknowledge also that *Polycarp* was bishop of *Smyrna* only, and that *metropolitans* and *patriarchs* did not arise until a considerable time after his day. When *Jerome* says, "It is the custom of the church for *bishops* to lay their hands on such as have been baptized by *presbyters* and *deacons*, and to invoke the Holy Spirit," he asserts nothing more than that it was the custom of the church in his day. Who doubts this? Do we not all know that, before the time of *Jerome*, the rite which is called *confirmation* had crept into the church, and began to claim apostolic institution? And even when *Jerome* refers to the *Acts of the Apostles* as his authority for this custom, it is nothing to the purpose as to the present controversy; for he does not say, that the persons who laid hands on baptized persons in the apostles' days were the same kind of bishops with those who arrogated to themselves that power in his days. Nay, he says, in another place, *directly the contrary*. And finally, when *Jerome* remarks, "what *Aaron* and his sons, and the *Levites* were in the temple, let the *bishops*, "*presbyters*, and *deacons* claim to themselves in the Church;" and when he speaks of this parallel as an apostolical *tradition*, we can only infer from his language the well-known fact, that in his day, high churchmen were fond of comparing the christian ministry with the Jewish priesthood; of endeavouring to show that the former succeeded to the grades, titles, and privileges of the latter; and of pleading apostolical *tradition* for this doctrine. It is known, independent of any testimony from



*Jerome*, that this was the fashionable doctrine and language of his time ; and it was natural for him to adopt that language, when he was not particularly called to speak of the system actually established by the apostles. But when *Jerome* undertakes professedly and formally to tell us how this matter actually stood in the apostolic age, he speaks in the following explicit and unequivocal language. *Comment. in Tit. 1. 9.* “ A *presbyter* is the same as a *bishop* ; and “ before there were, by the instigation of the devil, parties in religion, and it was said among the people, *I am of Paul, I of “ Apollos, and I of Cephas*, the churches were governed by the “ common council of *presbyters*. But *afterwards* when every one “ thought that those whom he baptized were rather *his* than *Christ’s*, “ it was determined through the whole world, that one of the *pres- “ byters* should be set above the rest, to whom all care of the church “ should belong, that the seeds of schism might be taken away. If “ any suppose that it is merely *my* opinion, and not that of the “ Scriptures, that *bishop* and *presbyter* are the same, and that one “ is the name of *age*, the other of *office*, let him read the words of “ the apostle to the *Philippians*, saying, *Paul and Timothy, the “ servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.* *Philippi* is a city “ of *Macedonia*, and certainly, in one city, there could not be more “ than one *bishop*, as they are *now* styled. But at that time they “ called the same men *bishops* whom they called *presbyters* ; there- “ fore, he speaks indifferently of *bishops* as of *presbyters*. This “ may seem, even yet, doubtful to some, till it be proved by another “ testimony. It is written in the Acts of the Apostles, that when “ the Apostle came to *Miletus* he sent to *Ephesus*, and called the “ *presbyters of that church*, to whom, among other things, he said, “ *Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over whom the Holy “ Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God which “ he hath purchased with his own blood.* Here observe diligently, that calling together the *presbyters* of one city, *Ephesus*, “ he afterwards styles the same persons *bishops*.

“ These things I have written to show, that among the ancients, “ *presbyters* and *bishops* were the same. But, *by little and little*, “ that all the seeds of dissension might be plucked up, the whole “ care was devolved on *one*. As, therefore, the *presbyters* know, “ that *by the custom of the church* they are subject to him who is

“their *president*, so let *bishops* know, that they are above *presbyters* more by the custom of the church, than by any real appointment of Christ.”

In his epistle to *Evagrius*, he speaks in the same pointed language, asserting, and proving by the same quotations from Scripture, that in the beginning, and during the apostle's days, a *bishop* and a *presbyter* were the same thing. After having done this, he proceeds thus: “As to the fact, that afterwards, one was elected to preside over the rest, this was done as a remedy against schism; lest every one drawing his proselytes to himself, should rend the Church of Christ. For at *Alexandria*, from *Mark* the evangelist, to the bishops *Heraclas* and *Dionysius*, the Presbyters always chose one of their number, placed him in a superior station, and gave him the title of *bishop*. In the same manner as if any army should make an emperor, or the deacons should choose from among themselves, one whom they knew to be particularly active and should call him *archdeacon*.”

Dr. Bowden, and his friends, do not hesitate to acknowledge, that *Jerome* represents some alteration of the original constitution of the church as having early taken place; but they insist that, according to him, this alteration took place during the time, and under the authority of the apostles. Is Dr. B. then prepared to adopt the opinion, that the inspired apostles at first adopted a form of government, which in a little while, they found ill judged, and insufficient to answer the purpose; and that they then altered it for a better? Yet if there is any meaning in part of his reasoning, this is the amount of it! But besides the blasphemy of the suggestion, *Jerome* could not have intended to say that this alteration took place during the times of the apostles, because he quotes the apostolical epistles to prove that it had not taken place at their date; and particularly in his epistle to *Evagrius*, he quotes the second and third epistles of *John* to show that Presbyterian parity existed when they were written, which was about thirty years after the schism at *Corinth*, which Dr. Bowden asserts is the period assigned by *Jerome* for the rise of prelacy. *Jerome* further tells us, that the practice of setting one of the presbyters above the rest, was brought in by degrees; which could never have been the case had it been founded on a distinct and positive order of the apostles. And, as if this were not sufficiently explicit, he adds, to take away all possibility of mistake,

“ Let the presbyters know that they are subject to him who is set over them *by the custom of the church* ; and let the bishops know, that they are greater than presbyters, rather *by the custom of the church*, than by any *real appointment of Christ*.”

If I were further to take up your time, brethren, in exposing the various attempts of Dr. *Bowden* to set aside this plain and unequivocal testimony of *Jerome*, I should trespass on your patience, and insult your understandings. I have only to say, that some of the most learned and able advocates of prelacy, as well as others, have understood *Jerome* as we understand him, and have confessed that he decisively maintains the apostolic origin of Presbyterian parity. To establish this fact, the most pointed quotations might be adduced, almost without number. The few following will be sufficient.

The celebrated episcopal divine, Dr. *Saravia*, explicitly grants that *Jerome* was against the divine right of episcopacy. “ *Jerome’s* opinion,” says he, “ was private, and coincided with that of *Aerius*.”\*

The learned prelatist, *Alphonso de Castro* understood *Jerome* in the same manner. He sharply reproves a certain writer who had endeavoured to set aside the testimony commonly derived from that father in favour of presbytery, and insists that the testimony, as usually adduced, is correct. “ But *Thomas Waldensis*,” says he, “ truly is deceived ; for *Jerome* does endeavour to prove that, according to *divine institution*, there was no difference between *presbyter* and *bishop*.” He afterwards adds, “ Neither ought any one to wonder that *Jerome*, though otherwise a most learned and excellent man was mistaken.”†

Bishop *Jewel* understood *Jerome* as we do, and expressly quotes the passage which is commonly quoted by Presbyterians, to show that this father asserts the original *equality* and *identity* of *bishops* and *presbyters*.‡

Bishop *Morton* interprets *Jerome* in the same manner. He expressly acknowledges that *Jerome* represents the difference between bishop and presbyter as brought into the church not by *divine*, but *human* authority. He further asserts, that there was no sub-

\* *De Gradibus Minist. Evangel.* Cap. 23.

† *Contra Heres.* p. 103, 104.

‡ *Defence of his Apology for the Church of England*, p. 248.

stantial difference, on the subject of episcopacy, between *Jerome* and *Aerius*. And further, that not only *all the protestants*, but also *all the primitive doctors* were of the same mind with *Jerome*. \*

The learned Episcopalian, professor *Whitaker*, concurred in this interpretation. "If *Aerius*," says he, "was a heretic in this point, he had *Jerome* to be his neighbour in that heresy; and not only him, but other fathers, both *Greek* and *Latin*, as is confessed by *Medina*. *Aerius* thought that presbyter did not differ from bishop by any divine law and authority; and the same thing was contended for by *Jerome*, and he defended it by those very scripture testimonies that *Aerius* did."†

Few men have been more distinguished for their learned and zealous labours in favour of episcopacy than Dr. *William Nichols*. Yet this eminent Episcopalian, speaking of *Jerome*, thus expresses himself. "At last came St. *Jerome*, though not till above three centuries after the apostles' times, who valuing himself upon his learning, which, indeed, was very great; and being provoked by the insolence of some deacons, who set themselves above presbyters; to the end he might maintain the dignity of his order against such arrogant persons, he advanced a notion never heard of before, viz. that presbyters were not a different order from bishops; and that a bishop was only a more eminent presbyter, chosen out of the rest, and set over them, for preventing of schism."‡

*Luther*, whom some of our episcopal brethren ignorantly claim as their own, in the *articles of Smalcald*, which he framed, expressly declares, that "*Jerome* teaches that the distinction of degrees between a bishop and a presbyter, or pastor, was appointed only by human authority." This declaration was also formally subscribed by *Melancthon*. In the *Confession of Wirtemberg*, *Jerome* is interpreted in the same manner; and in the second *Helvetic Confession*, he is particularly quoted in support of the doctrine that in the primitive church *bishop* and *presbyter* were the same. And, in a subsequent letter, you will find a number of

\* *Cathol. Apolog.* Lib. i. p. 118—120.

† *Controv.* iv. *Quest.* i. *Cap.* iii. *Sect.* 30.

‡ *Defence of the Doct. and Discip. of the Church of England* p. 241.

other illustrious divines, of different denominations, all concurring in the interpretation which we give of the learned father.

I shall close my remarks on the testimony of *Jerome*, with the judgment of bishop *Croft*, expressed in the following words—  
 “And now I desire my reader, if he understands *Latin*, to view  
 “the epistle of St. *Jerome* to *Evagrius*, and doubtless he will  
 “wonder to see men have the confidence to quote any thing out of  
 “it for the *distinction* between *episcopacy* and *presbytery*; for  
 “the whole epistle is to show the *identity* of them.”\*

I will not attempt to follow Dr. *Bowden* through all his tedious details of testimony from the fathers of the *third*, *fourth*, and following centuries, and his still more tedious comments on that testimony. What if *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, *Origen*, *Hilary*, *Epiphanius*, *Augustine*, and a dozen more, who lived within the same period, could be brought to attest in the most unequivocal terms that prelacy existed in *their* time? Does any Presbyterian deny that clerical impurity had begun to appear in the *third*, and was established in the *fourth* century? But Dr. *Bowden* alleges that several of these writers expressly assert the *apostolic institution* of prelacy. Now if it were even true that they *do* make this assertion, it would weigh nothing with me, nor with any other reasonable man. In this opinion every one must concur who seriously weighs the following facts.

Within fifty years after the apostolic age, the *wine* in the Lord's supper was constantly mixed with *water*. This mixture, considered, at first, as a measure of human prudence, soon began to be urged, not only as a matter of importance, but as a *divine institution*. *Irenæus* declares it to have been both taught and practised by our Saviour himself. Lib. iv. cap. 57.—*Cyprian* also asserts that the same thing was enjoined by tradition from the Lord, and made a part of the original institution. Epist. 63. ad *Cæcil*. But no Protestant now believes either the one or the other. Administering the *Lord's supper* to *infants* arose early in the church. It is certain that this corruption existed in the *second* century. *Cyprian*, in the *third* century, speaks of it, not as a new thing, but as an ordinary practice. *De Lapsis*. Sect. 13. *Augustine*

\* *Naked Truth*, p. 45.

calls it an *apostolical tradition*, represents it as a general custom, and expressly founds the propriety and necessity of it on *John vi. 53*. Now that this practice never had the least foundation either in scripture or apostolic example, our opponents, as well as ourselves, are fully agreed. Again; *Irenæus* positively asserts that Christ remained on earth until he had reached *old age*, that he was at least *fifty years* old when he was crucified; and that “this was ascertained by the unanimous tradition, and positive testimony of all the old men who had lived with St. *John*, and the other apostles, from whom they all received this account, and constantly bore witness to the truth of it.” Lib. II. cap. 39. But no one can open the Bible, without perceiving that this pretended fact, in behalf of which the authority of inspired men is quoted, is totally false. To mention only one case more; we learn from *Eusebius*, that, in the days of *Irenæus*, there arose a very fierce dispute respecting the proper time for the celebration of *Easter*. The churches of *Asia* took one side; and the western churches, with *Victor*, bishop of *Rome*, at their head, took the other. The former asserted, that they were supported by the authority of the apostles *John* and *Philip*. The latter, with equal confidence, plead the authority of *Peter* and *Paul* in justification of their practice. *Irenæus* addressed a letter to *Victor* on the subject, in which there is found the following passage. “This diversity did not begin in our time; but long ago among our forefathers; who, as it seems, through negligence in the management of their charge, handed down to their posterity a custom which through simplicity and ignorance had crept into the church.”\* And *Socrates*, the ecclesiastical historian, who wrote about a century after *Eusebius*, speaks of such observances generally in the following language. “Neither the ancients, nor the moderns, who have studiously followed the *Jews*, had, in my opinion, any just or rational cause for contending so much about this festival (*Easter*.) For they considered not with themselves, that when the *Jewish* religion was changed into *Christianity*, those accurate observances of the Mosaic law, and the types, wholly ceased. And this carries along with it its own demonstration. For no one of Christ’s laws has permitted *Christians* to observe

\* *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. v. Cap. 24.*



“ the rites of the *Jews*. On the contrary, the apostle has expressly forbid this, and does not only reject circumcision, but also advises against contending about festival days. Moreover, it is his admonition, that days, and months, and years, should in no wise be observed. Besides, in his epistle to the *Colossians*, he loudly affirms that such observances are a shadow. Men love festival days because thereon they have a cessation from their labour. Neither our Saviour nor his apostles have enjoined upon us by any law to observe such days.”\* Here, then, is a large body of churches and bishops asserting that they have *apostolical* authority for a certain practice. On the other hand there is a large body of equally respectable churches and bishops, who assert, with no less confidence, that they have *apostolical* authority for a different practice. And, to crown all, a third class, as much entitled to respect as either, pronounce, that both the former speak falsehood ; and that the plea of apostolical authority advanced by each, is equally and totally without foundation ! Who, after such notorious instances of either credulity or dishonesty, would give the least credit to a claim of *apostolical* institution, resting on no other ground than the assertion of the fathers ? Could we find in them, therefore, the most direct and decisive claim of this kind, in behalf of diocesan episcopacy, it would be unworthy of confidence.

But it is not true that any one of the fathers, within the *first four centuries*, does assert the apostolical institution of prelacy. Dr. *Bowden* produces *Cyprian* as saying, that “ Jesus Christ, and he alone, has the power of setting bishops over the church to govern it ;” that “ Christ constitutes as well as protects bishops ;” and that “ it is by *divine appointment* a bishop is set over the church.” He produces *Origen*, as saying, “ Shall I not be subject to the bishop who is of God ordained to be my father ? Shall not I be subject to the presbyter, who is, by *divine vouchsafement*, set over me ?” He quotes *Hilary* as declaring, “ The bishop is the chief ; though every bishop is a presbyter, yet every presbyter is not a bishop.” And also as asserting, that *James*, and *Timothy* and *Titus*, and the *angels* of the *Asiatic* churches were bishops, He cites *Athanasius* as remonstrating with one who declined a bishopric, in the following terms : “ If you think there is no reward

\* *Socrat. Eccles. Hist. Lib. v. cap. 22.*

“allotted to the office of a bishop, you despise the *Saviour* who “instituted that office.” He represents *Chrysostom*, as commenting on 1 *Tim.* iv. 4. in these words—“*Paul* does not speak of “*presbyters*, but of *bishops*, for *presbyters* did not ordain *Timothy* “a bishop.” And finally he produces the fathers of the council of *Antioch*, in the year 265, as declaring, that “the office of a bishop is *sacred* and exemplary, both to the clergy and to the people.” Now, is it possible that *Dr. Bowden*, after devoting the best powers of his mind, for thirty years, to this controversy, has yet to learn, that all these quotations, and ten thousand more like them, are nothing to his purpose? It is truly amazing! Have not I, who am a Presbyterian, repeatedly said, in the foregoing sheets, that “*bishops* were, by divine appointment, set over the church?” Do not Presbyterians perpetually speak of the office of bishop in their church as a “sacred office?” And would any Presbyterian on earth scruple to say, that bishops *were*, and *are* ordained of God to be set over the church; and also that every member of their flock, and even *assistant preachers*, within their parish, if not invested with a share in the *pastoral charge*, are bound to be “subject to them?” But no one, surely, could construe these expressions, on our part, as implying that we believed in the divine institution of *such bishops* as our episcopal brethren contend for. The truth is, these quotations, so pompously made, only prove two points; *first*, that the *fathers* in question believed that there were bishops in the apostolic church; which no man, in his senses, ever doubted: and *secondly*, that *at the time when they wrote*, bishops were considered as having some kind of superiority over common presbyters; which is as little doubted as the former. In short, *Dr. Bowden* is deceived by the bare occurrence of the word *bishop*. Whenever he finds this word in the writings of the fathers, his imagination is instantly filled with *prelates*, and with all the peculiarities of the episcopal system. But before the smallest touch of inquiry this hallucination vanishes. Though bishops in the third and fourth centuries, had appropriated to themselves powers, which before had been enjoyed by others in common with them; yet their office itself was of divine appointment. *Dr. Bowden*, indeed, says, and endeavours to persuade his readers, that the writers whom he quotes, declare the bishops which existed in the days of the

apostles to have been just *such bishops*, as existed several centuries afterwards, in their own times—bishops in the *prelatical* sense of the word. But the doctor, with all his confidence, must pardon me for saying, this is not true. He has produced no passage which makes any such declaration, or which legitimately implies it ; nor is he able to produce such a passage, from all the stores of antiquity, within the specified limits.

Besides the direct quotations from the fathers, which prove that the primitive bishop was the pastor of a single congregation, I mentioned, in my former letters, some *facts*, incidentally stated by early writers, which serve remarkably to confirm the same truth. Dr. *Bowden* treats these alleged facts with great contempt, and endeavours to show that they are all either unfounded, or nothing to the purpose. I do not think it necessary to go over this part of the ground again. Of the *five* facts mentioned by me and assailed by Dr. B. there are only *two* of which it appears proper to take any further notice.

The *first* of these is, the GREAT NUMBER of bishops which ecclesiastical historians inform us were found, in early periods of the church, within small districts of country. Suppose a man in *Europe* were to be told, that there are, at this time, within the State of *New York* TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY bishops. What would be his conclusion ? Why, certainly, that these could not be *such* bishops as are found in any church in which *diocesan* episcopacy is established. And if he were immediately afterwards informed that, within the whole State, there are only about *two hundred and fifty* organized congregations, he would confidently infer that there must be a bishop *in every congregation*, and, therefore, that the title *bishop* was considered as synonymous with that of *pastor* of a single church. This is precisely my argument in the present case. When we find in *provincial synods*, in early times, *several hundred* bishops convened ; when we find, upon inquiry, that these bishops and their bishoprics were all embraced in districts of country not much, if at all, more extensive than the State of *New York* ; and when we have reason further to conclude that many parts, even of these districts, were not subjected to the empire of Christianity ; what must be our conclusion ? Unquestionably, that which has been just mentioned. These bishops could have been no other than parish *rectors*, or

*pastors*; and the fact goes far toward corroborating the doctrine in support of which it was produced, viz. that *primitive* episcopacy was *parochial*, and not *diocesan*.

Dr. *Bowden* does not deny that, in the council of *Antioch* in the third century, there were upwards of *six hundred* bishops. He does not deny that there were present at a *provincial* synod, in *Africa*, in the time of *Augustine*, between *five and six hundred* Bishops. Neither does he deny, that about the same time, according to *Victor Uticensis*, from that part of *Africa* in which the *Vandalic persecution* raged, *six hundred and sixty* bishops fled, besides the *great number* that were murdered and imprisoned, and *many more* who were tolerated. Now when it is recollected that this persecution extended only to a small portion of *Africa*, and that it was carried on by one denomination of professing Christians against another, we are necessarily led to conclude that there must have been in that section of *Africa* alone, at least *two thousand* bishops. Could these have been *prelates*, each with a number of congregations and pastors under his care? It is incredible. They could not have been more than the ordinary pastors of single congregations. It is not likely that organized churches were more thickly strewed in *Africa*, at that time, than at present in our own country; nor can we, by any means, suppose that the persecution in question prevailed through a district larger than the United States; yet I am persuaded we have not in the United States many more than *two thousand* regular clergymen of all denominations.

All that Dr. *Bowden* has to offer in opposition to this reasoning, is, that the “learned *Bingham*, in his *Antiquities of the Church*, has given a geographical description of the ancient bishoprics, as first made toward the close of the *ninth* century;” and that, according to his representation, there is no difficulty in accounting for the number of bishops found in the early councils.—To this testimony of *Bingham* I might offer many objections. The work which contains it, though apparently much respected by Dr. *Bowden*, is a work of great partiality, and little credit. The sources from which the author derived his information, are by no means such as ought to inspire the confidence of any reasonable man. And, how any mortal can with confidence determine, from arrangements made in the *ninth* century, what were those of the

*third* and *fourth*, Dr. Bowden may be able to explain ; I am not. But after all, what is the amount of *Bingham's* testimony ? It is that, even in the *ninth* century, many of the bishops' dioceses were of very small extent, little, if any, larger than many of our modern parishes. And is not this precisely the position for which I contend, and on which this whole argument is founded ? Besides, if bishoprics were thus small in the *ninth* century, have we not abundant proof that they were smaller still, in the *third* and *fourth* centuries, when it is certain that bishops were more numerous than they were several hundred years afterwards ? but this is not the only instance in which Dr. Bowden unwittingly betrays his own cause, and supports the Presbyterian doctrine.

But, with respect to the *African* bishoprics, Dr. Bowden, following his suspicious guide, *Bingham*, takes a ground somewhat different. He asserts, that " in the whole extent of that country, " from the borders of *Egypt* to the western part of the peninsula, " comprehending a length of 2360 miles, and a breadth in some " places of 200, in others of 500 miles, there were but 466 dioceses ; as appears, he adds, from the *Collation of Carthage*, the " *abstract of St. Austin*, and the *Notitia of the African church*, " made about fifty years after *Austin's* death, and published by " *Sirmondus*." On this statement I shall make no remark ; but shall leave it, to be treated as it deserves, by those who recollect the account given by *Victor Uticensis* of the number of bishops banished, murdered, &c. during the *Vandalic persecution* ; and also the numbers of bishops actually convened in *provincial* synods, about the same time.

The next *fact* which I think it my duty further to notice, is, that in early times, it was customary for the *flock* of which the bishop was to have the charge, to *meet together* for the purpose of *electing* him ; and that he was always *ordained in their presence*. This was mentioned as another consideration which evinces that primitive episcopacy was *parochial*, and not *diocesan*. Dr. Bowden denies the fact. He declares that there are no traces of the *popular* election of bishops during the first *two hundred* years after Christ ; and that so far as this practice *ever* prevailed, it arose in the *third* century, but was soon laid aside. In reply to these bold assertions, I shall only present the following quotation from *Cyprian*, Doctor Bowden's favourite authority. *Epist.* 67. " Wherefore a people

“ who would obey the rules of the gospel should separate themselves  
 ‘ from a sinful bishop, and should not partake with a profane priest  
 ‘ in his sacrifices ; especially since the CHIEF POWER of choosing  
 “ worthy priests, and of rejecting unworthy ones, is lodged with  
 “ them : which rule we see *proceeded originally from God’s*  
 “ *authority*, that a bishop should be chosen in the presence of the  
 “ people, in the most public manner, and be approved as worthy  
 “ by the common suffrage of the whole body. God directs his  
 “ priest to be made so before all the congregation ; and thereby  
 “ shows us, that he would not have the ordinations of his bishops  
 “ performed, but in the presence, and with the privity of the peo-  
 “ ple. This rule, thus *appointed by God*, we find afterwards  
 “ observed in the *Acts* of the Apostles, when *Peter* spoke to the  
 “ people, upon the point of substituting some one to be an apostle,  
 “ in the room of *Judas*. Nor do we find the apostles observing  
 “ this rule in the case of bishops and priests only, but even in the  
 “ ordination of *deacons* ; concerning which it is recorded in *Acts*,  
 “ vi. 2. *Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples*  
 “ *unto them, and said, Look ye out seven men of honest report*  
 “ *full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom ; and the saying pleased*  
 “ *the whole multitude ; and they chose Stephen, &c. whom they set*  
 “ *before the apostles, &c.* Wherefore the rule which we have  
 “ *handed down to us from God himself*, and from the *practice of*  
 “ *his apostles*, should be observed with all exactness, as it is,  
 “ indeed, already amongst us, and generally amongst the provinces  
 “ here ; viz. that in celebrating our ordinations, the neighbouring  
 “ bishops of the province, where a bishop is to be ordained for any  
 “ people,\* should meet upon the place, and choose a bishop in the  
 “ presence of the people. *This rule we find you observed* in the  
 “ ordination of our colleague, *Sabinus*, who was unanimously cho-  
 “ sen *by the votes of all the people*, and the approbation of the  
 “ bishops who were there assembled.”

Here *Cyprian*, who flourished about the middle of the third

\* How remarkably does *Cyprian* speak in the *Presbyterian* style ! To  
 ordain a bishop *for, or over, a people, or flock*, is scarcely intelligible on  
 episcopal principles. The episcopal bishop of *New York*, as such, is  
 equally related to all the congregations belonging to that communion in  
 the State. In *our church*, a bishop is ordained over a particular *flock or*  
*people*.



century, declares that the election of bishops by *the votes of all the people*, was a regulation *established by God himself*, and sanctioned by the *practice of the apostles*. And, lest the nature of this "election should be mistaken, he asserts that the *chief power of choice* lies with the people, by divine right. Nay, to render the point still more unequivocal, he represents the election in question as of the same nature with that of the *deacons*, in *Acts vi. 2, 3, &c.* in which it is expressly asserted, that the *whole multitude*, or the *body of the people*, made the choice.\* If this is not testimony that the method of popular election was practised in the days of *Cyprian*, and that that father considered it as of divine appointment, and as having been received in the church from the days of the apostles, then I know not how to understand or interpret his language. Dr. *Bowden* gives only a *part* of the above extract from *Cyprian*, and endeavours to prove from it that an actual election by the people is not at all intended. I trust, however, that of this gloss, on further consideration, he will be ashamed.

Having thus, with all possible brevity, replied to such of Dr. *Bowden's* strictures as appeared worthy of notice, I shall select a few additional testimonies from the fathers, and request you to give them your serious attention.

*Hilary*, in his commentary on 1 *Timothy iii.* affirms "The ordination of bishop and presbyter is *one* and the *same*." Could he possibly have said this, if they had been different orders, and had received a different ordination ?

The following passage from *Basil*, bishop of *Cesarea*, who was contemporary with *Jerome*, is also worthy of notice.—"Christ says, Lovest thou me, *Peter*, more than these ? Feed my sheep. And from thence he gave to all pastors and doctors *equal power* ; whereof this is a token, that all of them, as *Peter* did, bind and loose."†

In the 4th Council of *Carthage*, the following canon was passed :

\* It ought to be recollected, that the epistle from which the above extract is taken, was written to some people in *Spain*, who wished advice in a case in which the right of the people to choose their own bishop was immediately concerned ; and that it was written not in the name of *Cyprian* only, but in that of the *African* synod.

† *Constitut. Monastic.* Cap. 22. p. 718.

“ Let the bishop, when he is in the church, and sitting in the presbytery, be placed in a higher seat ; but when he is in the house, let him know that he is *the colleague* of the presbyters.”

*Can.* 35. By the same council, it was enacted, “ that every bishop should reside in a small house near the church in which he officiated”—that he should have “ plain and even coarse household furniture”—and that “ he should give himself perpetually to reading, praying, and preaching.” *Can.* 14, 15, 20.

In the *Apostolical Constitutions* the following passages are found, which Dr. Bowden is bound, on his own principles, to respect and admit. *Lib.* 11. *Cap.* 27. “ It behoves you, brethren, to bring your sacrifices and oblations to the bishop, as to the high priest, and offer them, either by yourselves, or by the deacons. Offer the bishop also your first fruits and tythes, and your voluntary gifts ; for he knows the poor, and gives to every one what is convenient ; lest one receive twice or oftener the same day, or the same week, and another receive not so much as once.” *Cap.* 31. “ The deacon must give nothing to any poor man without the bishop’s knowledge and consent.” *Cap.* 44. “ The *deacon* must be the bishop’s eye, and ear, and mouth, nay, his heart and soul, that the bishop may be only taken up with the weightier affairs of his flock.” Here it is evident that the business of the *deacons* was to take care of the *poor*. This is exactly the doctrine of the Presbyterians, and, what is much more important, of the New Testament. Here it is evident, also, that no poor man was to be relieved without the knowledge and approbation of the bishop ; who, it is expressly said, is presumed to know all the poor, and to be able to give to every one what is convenient. Could this officer have been any other than the pastor of a single flock ?

Again ; the same *Apostolical Constitutions* thus describe the ordinary solemnities of public worship. *Lib.* 11. *Cap.* 57. “ When thou, O bishop, hast called together the church of God, like the master of a ship, require them to assemble often, with all prudence and regularity of discipline. Command the *deacons*, as so many mariners, that they appoint convenient places for all the brethren, as for so many passengers, with all care and decency. And first let the house of worship be oblong, turned toward the east, having seats (or *pews*) on both sides, towards the east, and like a ship. In the middle place let the *bishop’s*

“ seat be; and on both sides of him let the *presbyters* sit. But let  
 “ the *deacons* stand ready for service, lightly clothed, for they are  
 “ like the mariners, and those that order the sides of the ship. By  
 “ their care, let the *laymen* sit quietly and orderly in one part of  
 “ the church : and the women also by themselves, abstaining from  
 “ talking. Let the reader, standing in the middle, in some high  
 “ place, read the books of *Moses*, &c. The reading being finished,  
 “ let another sing the hymns of *David*. Then let our *Acts* (i. e.  
 “ the *Acts of the Apostles*) and the *epistles*, be recited. After  
 “ these things let the *presbyters* exhort the people; and last of  
 “ all the *bishop*, who is like the master of the ship. Let the  
 “ *door-keepers* stand at the church doors, where the men enter;  
 “ and the *deaconesses* where the women enter. If any be found  
 “ sitting out of his own place, let the deacon reprove him, and let  
 “ him be conducted to a proper place. Let the deacons take  
 “ care that none whisper, sleep, laugh, nod, &c. After the cate-  
 “ chumens and penitents have retired, let the deacons prepare for  
 “ the celebration of the *Eucharist*, &c.”

No one can read these rules without perceiving that they relate to the *ordinary worship* of Christian assemblies, when convened on the sabbath. To doubt this, is to fly in the face of common sense. Yet we find the presence of the bishop, in every public service, spoken of as indispensable. Is it not manifest, then, that this bishop could only have been the pastor of a single flock?

The sixth general council of *Constantinople*, which was held about the year 692, acknowledged the “ scripture deacons to be no other than *overseers of the poor*; and that this was the opinion of the ancient fathers.” *Can.* 16. Here is another explicit acknowledgment, that the apostolic constitution of the church, as to her officers, was notoriously changed, prior to the year 692.

The council of *Aix la Chapelle*, held about the year 816, in the most unequivocal terms owned the original identity of bishops and presbyters, and expressly declared, that “ the ordination of the clergy was reserved to the high-priest only for the maintenance of his dignity.” *Can.* 8. Could this form of expression have been thought correct if presbyters were, by divine right, destitute of the power of ordaining? Certainly not.

Some other facts, which are ascertained from the writings of the fathers, and which were mentioned in my former letters, deserve

further consideration. We are informed, by several early writers, that the *bishops*, during the first three centuries, were alone considered as authorized to administer *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*. From *Ignatius*, *Tertullian*, and *Cyprian*, we learn that Christians, in those days, received the *eucharist* from no hands but those of the bishop; and that *baptism* was considered as his *appropriate* work, and never to be administered by any other hands, unless in cases of necessity. Again, in the 30th canon of the council of *Agatha*, it is said—"It shall not be lawful for a presbyter in the church to pronounce the benediction on the people, or to bless a penitent." Now, when it is notorious, that, in those days, the *Lord's supper* was administered every sabbath, and in some churches oftener; when cases of *baptism* doubtless continually occurred; and when pronouncing the benediction on the people made, then, as well as now, a part of every public service; it is plain that the presence of a bishop was considered as indispensable, every Lord's day, in every worshipping assembly. Is it not evident, when this was the case, that the bishop could have been nothing less or more than the *pastor* of a *single church*?

Dr. *Bowden* does not attempt to deny the *facts* here alleged. They are, indeed, so abundantly confirmed by the voice of antiquity, that he cannot possibly call them in question. But he endeavours to evade their force by saying, that these writers only mean in general to represent the bishop as the fountain of all ecclesiastical power; and to assert that none have a right to administer the ordinances of religion, excepting those who are empowered by him. And, in like manner, and on the same principle, he intimates, that the presbyters in the episcopal church, baptize and administer the *eucharist* in virtue of permission given them by the bishop for that purpose. This is an evasion unworthy of Dr. B's understanding and gravity. The writers above quoted, undoubtedly convey the idea, that administering *baptism* and the sacrament of the *Lord's supper* was the *appropriated* and *peculiar* work of the bishop as such; that in cases of *necessity* only they might commit these ordinances to other hands; but that for *every such dispensation* there must be a distinct expression of the bishop's will, and his leave expressly obtained. In short, the idea evidently meant to be conveyed is, that certain acts could be done *regularly* by the bishop *only*; but that in cases of sickness, necessary absence,

&c. he might empower some one to perform them *as his substitute* ; just as, among Presbyterians, the administration of sealing ordinances is considered as the appropriate duty of each pastor within his parish ; though at the same time, if he have an *assistant*, or if any other ordained minister happen to be present, the pastor may, without transgressing any ecclesiastical law, request him to officiate in his room : it being always remembered, however, that for *every such act*, a *new* request, and a *new* permission, on the part of the pastor, are necessary. But does this bear any resemblance to the episcopal system, in which baptism and the Lord's supper are in no degree the appropriated duty of a prelate ; but according to which every presbyter, whether he have the charge of a congregation or not, is considered as possessing, in virtue of his general commission, a right to administer both the sacraments, at all times, and in all places, without consulting his bishop ? I am astonished that Dr. *Bowden* could so far impose on himself as to imagine that there is any resemblance between the two cases.

After all, then, that Dr. *Bowden* has urged against my exhibition of the testimony of the fathers, it appears that he has not succeeded in setting aside a single material fact, or in refuting a single important argument, which I had deduced from the works of those early writers.

It appears, that the titles, *bishop* and *presbyter*, were promiscuously applied to the same persons, not only in the apostolic age, but also till the close of the *second* century. This Dr. *Bowden* himself acknowledges ; though he asserts, at the same time, that in the second century, it was *seldom* so applied. Now if the interchangeable application of these terms was continued until that time, and afterwards does not occur, must we not conclude, that *about*, or immediately *after* that time, some *change* took place in the arrangement of ecclesiastical dignities, which led to a more restricted use of the word *bishop* ? No supposition can be more natural ; and it is precisely this for which we contend.

It appears, that Dr. *Bowden* has not produced, and cannot produce, a single sentence, from any writer within the first two hundred years, which gives the least hint that *ordination* or *confirmation* was in *fact* confined to a particular order of prelates, or was considered as a right which *ought* to be so confined.

It appears, that *presbyters* are expressly represented by early writers, and particularly by *Ignatius* and *Irenæus*, as the *successors of the apostles*, and as *presiding* over the church.

It appears, that in *every worshipping assembly*, in the primitive church, the presence of a bishop was considered as indispensable. That it was the bishop's peculiar duty to preach, and to bless the people ; to administer baptism, and the Lord's supper ; to attend to the case of every *poor person* in his parish that needed relief ; to celebrate, or give his personal consent to the celebration, of all marriages among the people of his charge ; to visit the sick ; to instruct the children of his flock statedly every week ; and, in short, to perform all those duties which are now, and ever have been considered, as the proper work of a parish minister.

It appears, after all that has been said to the contrary, that the *number of bishops* found, in early times, in small districts of country, precludes the idea of their having been any other than parish ministers.

It appears, that, even after a kind of prelacy arose, the bishops were still, for the most part, only pastors of single congregations ; and that there was little, if any other difference between them and their presbyters, than that which now subsists between *pastors* and their assistants, in Presbyterian churches, and *rectors* and their *curates*, in episcopal churches.

It appears that *Jerome*, after all the unwearied pains which have been taken by high-churchmen, to set aside his testimony, does explicitly declare, that *Presbyterian parity* was the *apostolic* and *primitive* form of church government ; and that this form was *afterwards*, and *gradually*, exchanged for *prelacy*. And it is evident, moreover, that some of the most learned and zealous episcopal divines have so understood him.

It appears from *Jerome*, that the first approach towards prelacy was the standing *moderatorship* of one of the presbyters ; that this began in the church of *Alexandria* very early ; soon, if not immediately after the days of *Mark* the evangelist ; and that this was the only kind of clerical imparity that existed in that church until the middle of the third century, when it gave place to some higher encroachments of ecclesiastical ambition.

It appears from several unexceptionable testimonies, that *deacons* in the primitive church, were not an order of clergy at all ;



that they were only entrusted with the care of the *poor*, and employed to assist in the administration of the *Lord's supper*, as in the Presbyterian church at present; and that their gradually coming to be considered as a third order of clergy, was, like the claims of the prelates, an innovation.

It appears, from the declaration of several fathers, besides *Jerome*, that *some change* in the powers and prerogatives of bishops, did *actually* take place, within the first three centuries; and that several things were *appropriated* to bishops in the *third* and *fourth* centuries, which those writers assert were *not appropriated* to them in the *apostolic* age.\*

Finally, it appears, from all that has been said, that the writings of the fathers, instead of speaking "decisively" and "unanimously" in favour of prelacy, as some of our high-toned episcopal brethren assert, do not produce a single testimony, within the prescribed limits, which gives the least countenance to the prelatical claim; and that we are abundantly warranted (to repeat the language of Bishop *Croft*, formerly cited) in pronouncing, that the proofs brought to support this claim are altogether "weak; no scripture; no primitive general council; no general consent of primitive doctors and fathers; no, not *one* primitive father of note, speaking particularly and home to the purpose" of its advocates.

\* Among the fathers mentioned in my former volume, as speaking of this change, is *Hilary*. I represent him as saying, "And in *Egypt*, even "at this day, the presbyters *ordain* (*consignant*) in the bishop's absence." Dr. *Bowden* asserts, that the word *consignant* has no reference to *ordination*. He does not, indeed, appear to be certain what it *does* signify; but is very confident that it cannot mean *ordination*. I forgot to notice this in its proper place; and have now neither time, nor room to make more than *two* remarks upon it. The *first* is, that several eminent episcopal divines, and, among others, Bishop *Forbes*, have understood *Hilary* as I do, to be speaking here of *ordination*. The *second* remark is, that whatever religious rite it is that *Hilary* refers to, it is *something* which the bishops, *in his day*, generally claimed as their prerogative; but which had *not* been *always* appropriated to them; and which even in his time, in the bishop's absence, the presbyters considered themselves as empowered to perform. This is sufficient for my purpose.

## LETTER VI.

## TESTIMONY OF THE REFORMERS.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN the *sixth* of my former letters, I endeavoured to show that the great body of the *Reformers*, and other *witnesses for the truth*, in different ages and nations, were *Presbyterians* in principle. This allegation, and the proof by which it is supported, Dr. *Bowden*, according to his usual manner, confidently rejects, and pronounces a total misrepresentation. With what justice he does this, a few remarks will enable you to determine.

I asserted that the *Waldenses* were substantially Presbyterians, both in principle and practice; that among other points, in which they rejected the corruptions of the Romish church, they held, that there ought to be *no diversity of rank* among the ministers of the gospel; and that bishops and presbyters, according to the word of God, and primitive usage, were the same order. All this, Dr. *Bowden* denies; and insists that the *Waldenses* were uniformly *Episcopal* in their ecclesiastical character. The following testimonies will show on which side the truth lies.

*John Paul Perrin*, who was himself a pastor among them, in his *history* of that people, delivers at length, “the discipline under which the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses* lived; extracted out of divers authentic manuscripts, written in their own language, SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE LUTHER OR CALVIN.” From this work, the following extracts are made. Art. 2. “Of *pastors*.” “All they that are to be received as *pastors* amongst

“ us, whilst they are yet with their own people, are to entreat  
 “ ours, that they would be pleased to receive them to the ministry ;  
 “ and to pray to God that they may be made worthy of so great  
 “ an office. We also appoint them their lectures, and set them  
 “ their task, causing them to learn by memory all the chapters of  
 “ St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, and all the *epistles* that are canonical,  
 “ and a good part of the writings of *Solomon*, *David*, and the  
 “ *prophets*. Afterwards, having produced good testimonials, and  
 “ being well approved for their sufficiency, they are received *with*  
 “ *imposition of hands* into the office of teachers. He that is ad-  
 “ mitted in the last place, shall not do any thing without the leave  
 “ or allowance of him that was admitted before him. As also he  
 “ that was admitted first, shall do nothing without the leave of his  
 “ associates, to the end that all things, with us, may be done in  
 “ order. Diet and apparel are given unto us freely, and by way  
 “ of alms, and that with sufficiency, by those good people whom we  
 “ teach. Amongst other powers and abilities which God hath  
 “ given to his servants, he hath given authority to choose leaders,  
 “ to rule the people, and to ordain elders in their charges.—  
 “ When any of us, the aforesaid pastors, falls into any gross sins,  
 “ he is both excommunicated, and prohibited to preach.” Art. 4.  
 “ Our *Pastors* do call assemblies once every year, to determine of  
 “ all affairs in a general Synod.”\*

In another *Confession of Faith*, drawn up about the year 1220, they declare that the functions of *ministers* consist in “ preaching the word and administering sacraments,” and that “ all other ministerial things may be reduced to the aforesaid.” Speaking of the rite of *confirmation*, and of the Popish claims that it must be administered by a *bishop*, they assert, that “ it has *no ground at all* in *Scripture* ; that it was introduced by the *Devil’s instigation*, “ to seduce the people; that by such means they might be induced “ the more to believe the ceremonies, and the *necessity* of the “ *bishops*.”†

In the same work, (chap. 4.) it is expressly and repeatedly asserted, that the Synods of the *Waldenses* were composed of

\* PERRIN’S *History of the Old Waldenses*, Part II. Book v. Chap. 7.

† *Ibid.* Chap. 8.

*ministers and elders.* This mode of speaking is surely not *Episcopal*.

The same historian tells us, that *Waldo*, (from whose name that of the *Waldenses* is said to be derived,) “upon his departure from *Lyons*, came into *Dauphiny*, and thence, having erected some churches, and laid the foundation of those which have been miraculously preserved there to this day, he went into *Languedoc*, and left some notable *pastors* there, who set up and governed those churches, which afterwards cost the pope and his clergy so much pains to destroy.”\* Now it is certain that *Waldo* himself was no prelate; neither can we suppose that the *pastors* whom he left in *Languedoc* were prelates. Yet these *pastors set up and governed churches*.

In perfect coincidence with all this, is the testimony of *Gillis*, in his *History of the Waldenses*. This writer, like *Perrin*, was one of the *pastors* of that people, and therefore perfectly qualified to give an account of their peculiar doctrines and practices. He speaks familiarly of the *pastors* of their churches, in the Presbyterian style. He says, “These *pastors*, in their ordinary assemblies, came together and held a synod once a year, and most generally in the month of *September*, at which they examined the students, and admitted them to the ministry.” Chap. II. p. 12.

In their *Confession of Faith*, which *Gillis* inserts at length, in the “addition” to his work, p. 490, and which he expressly informs us was the confession of the *ancient* as well as the *modern Waldenses*; in *Article 31*, they declare, “It is necessary for the church to have *pastors* esteemed sufficiently learned, and exemplary in their conduct, as well to preach God’s word, as to administer the sacraments, and watch over the sheep of Jesus Christ, together with the *elders* and *deacons*, according to the rules of good and holy church discipline, and the practice of the primitive church.”

Here is better testimony than *Thuanus* or *Walsingham*, than *Mosheim* or *Allix*. Here are the declarations of the *Waldenses* themselves. And I will venture to say that there is not a syllable in the above extracts which has the most distant appearance of

\* Part II. Book II. Chap. 9.

prelacy. On the contrary, they all bear the most decisive indications of Presbyterian parity. But besides this, *Bellarmino* acknowledges that the *Waldenses* denied the divine right of prelacy. *Medina*, in the council of *Trent*, declared that the *Waldenses* were of the same mind with *Aerius* on this subject. And the learned Episcopalian, professor *Rainolds*, in his famous letter to Sir *Francis Knollys*, asserts, that the *Waldenses*, and all others who had distinguished themselves as opposers of popery, and as reformers of the church, for 500 years, prior to the *seventeenth century*, had uniformly taught that “all *pastors*, whether styled *bishops* or *priests*, have one and the same authority by the word of “God.”

Dr. *Bowden* also insists, in opposition to my statement, that the *Bohemian* churches were episcopal, in his sense of the word. In this, however, as in the former case, he is contradicted by the most unquestionable testimony. In their *Confession*, there is not only a profound silence as to any distinction or difference of degrees among pastors; but, what is more decisive, they place *ordination*, and excommunication, as well as preaching the gospel, not in the power of one, but in the hands of *presbyters* and *brethren* of the ministry. And in their *Book of Order*, or *Discipline*, p. 20, we have the following express words. “It is true, the *Bohemians* have “certain *bishops*, or *superintendents*, who are conspicuous for age “and gifts; and chosen by the suffrages of all the ministers, for “the keeping of order, and to see that all the rest do their office. “Four, or five, or six such have they, as need requires; and each “of these has his diocese. But the dignity of these above other “ministers, is not founded in the *prerogative* of honours or *revenues*, but of *labours* and *cares* for others. And, according to “the *apostles’ rules*, a *presbyter* and *bishop* are *one and the same thing*.” But it is to be presumed that Dr. *Bowden* will not doubt a moment longer, when he is told, that even his own favourite high-church historian, Dr. *Heylin*, explicitly grants that the *Bohemian* churches were not episcopal, either in principle or practice. In his *History of the Presbyterians*, p. 409, 410. there is the following decisive passage. “About the year 1400, we find a strong “party to be raised amongst the *Bohemians*, against some superstitions and corruptions in the church of *Rome*; occasioned, as “some say, by reading the works of *Wickliffe*, and by the diligence

“ of *Picardus*, a Fleming, as is affirmed by some others, from whom  
 “ they had the name of *Picards*. Cruelly persecuted by their own  
 “ kings, and publicly condemned in the council of *Constance*, they  
 “ continued constant, notwithstanding, to their own persuasions.  
 “ In this condition they remained till the preaching of *Luther*, and  
 “ the receiving of the *Augustan Confession* in most parts of the  
 “ empire, which gave them so much confidence as to purge them-  
 “ selves from all former calumnies, by publishing a declaration of  
 “ their faith and doctrine ; which they presented at *Vienna* to the  
 “ Archduke *Ferdinand*, about ten years before chosen king of *Bo-*  
 “ *hemia* ; together with a large apology prefixed before it. By  
 “ which *Confession* it appears that they ascribe no power to the  
 “ civil magistrate in the concernments of the church ; that they  
 “ had fallen upon a way of ordaining ministers amongst them-  
 “ selves, without recourse unto the bishop, or any such superior  
 “ officer as a superintendent ; and finally, that they retained the  
 “ use of excommunication, and other ecclesiastical censures, for  
 “ the chastising of irregular and scandalous persons.”

As to the observations made by Dr. *Bowden* and his clerical friend in *Philadelphia*, on the testimony of *Thuanus*, *Enneas Sylvius*, and *Walsingham*, respecting the *Waldenses* and the *Bohemian Brethren*, I consider them as unworthy of notice. It would be easy for me to show, that these writers really say what I ascribe to them ; and that they are entitled to credit. It would also be easy to produce passages from *Alphonso de Castro*, *Voetius*, and other learned writers, who, in the most positive terms, give the same account of those celebrated witnesses for the truth. But it is unnecessary. The authority of their own historians and confessions of faith is paramount to every other.\*

\* Among the few gratifications which this controversy has afforded me, none of the least is, that it has led me to peruse, with particular care, the *history* and the *confessions* of the *Waldenses*, who are allowed, by all protestants, to have been the purest part of the Christian church during the dark ages. Their coincidence with our church, in almost all respects, both of doctrine and discipline, is really remarkable. Our *Baptist* brethren, among other advocates of error, have sometimes ventured to assert, with confidence, that the *Waldenses* were *anti-pædobaptists*. I take for granted that those who have made this assertion, never read the ancient *confessions* of that celebrated people. In those confessions, and other authentic documents concerning them, the *pædobaptist* doctrine is unequivocally and strongly maintained.



Dr. *Bowden* does not deny that *Wickliffe* held the doctrine of Presbyterian parity. But in order to diminish the weight of this fact, he endeavours to destroy the character of that illustrious reformer, by repeating the accusations brought against him by some virulent *papists*. I must say that I expected more *prudence*, if not more *consistency*, from this gentleman. It is really astonishing to find a protestant divine so often obliged to avail himself of the arguments, the cavils, and even the violence of *papists*, in order to support his cause. But his attempt, in this instance, is as impotent as it is reprehensible. *Wickliffe* will continue to be hailed as the "morning star of the reformation," and honoured as an eminent "witness for the truth," and that by the great body of learned and pious Episcopalians, as well as others, when the slanders with which his character has been aspersed shall have "gone the way of all such mis-begotten things."

With respect to *Tyndal*, *Lambert*, *Barnes*, *Hamilton*, and other distinguished martyrs for the truth in *Great Britain*, before the time of *Cranmer*, it is notorious that they, with one voice, maintained the doctrine of Presbyterian parity. Dr. *Bowden*, indeed, denies this, with respect to *Tyndal* and *Lambert*, or rather endeavours to put an unnatural gloss on their language. It really surprises me that such an attempt should be made by a gentleman who professes to be acquainted with the history of the reformation in Britain.

But Dr. *Bowden* seems to be most of all offended at my having asserted, that archbishop *Cranmer*, and the fathers of the reformation in *England*, generally, believed that bishop and presbyter were the same, by divine right; and that ministerial parity was the doctrine and practice of the primitive church. He denies this position with warmth and confidence; and insists that those venerable reformers were firm believers in the divine institution of prelacy. Mr. *How* takes the same ground, with even greater warmth, and with much acrimonious remark. On this point, my observations shall be few and short.

Dr. *Bowden*, in many of his statements concerning the reformation in *England*, avowedly relies on the authority of *Heylin* and *Collier*. With respect to these writers, I think proper, once for all, to declare, that I place no reliance either on the candour or the truth of their representations. And of course that no alleged fact, which does not rest on some other testimony, will be acknow-

ledged by me. The learned and able editors of the *Christian Observer*, who, as was before observed, are warm *Episcopalians*, speak of these writers in the following manner: "Mr. Daubeny," say they, "in many of his references to historical facts, and in the "deductions made from them, professedly follows authorities of a "highly exceptionable nature. Every reader who is conversant "with the present subject of debate, knows how forcibly this "remark applies to the writings of *Collier* and *Heylin*. We "speak from a careful comparison of what they have written, with "the sources from which they drew, or might have drawn their "materials—when we affirm, that in all matters immediately "bearing upon the *Calvinistic* controversy, they are most *unsafe* "guides. Of Dr. *Heylin*, in particular, we have no hesitation in "saying, that we do not know of any author, ancient or modern, in "whose pages is to be found a larger portion of false reasonings, "incorrect statements, and palpable misrepresentations."\* Bishop *Burnet*, in the preface to his *History of the Reformation*, declares, "Either *Heylin* was very ill informed, or very much led by his "passions; and being wrought on by most violent prejudices, "against some that were concerned in that time, delivers many "things in such a manner, and so strangely, that one would think "he had been secretly set on to it by those of the church of *Rome*. "In one thing he is not to be excused, that he never vouched any "authority for what he writ, which is not to be forgiven any who "write of transactions beyond their own time, and deliver new "things not known before. So that upon what grounds he wrote "a great deal of his book we can only conjecture, and many in "their guesses are not apt to be very favourable to him." Of the same wretched bigot and calumniator, Bishop *Barlow* uses this strong language—"Peter *Heylin's* angry, and (to our church and truth) scandalous writings."†

I had stated that the *Bishop's Book* composed by *Cranmer*, and several other prelates, in 1537, and subscribed by nineteen bishops, and the lower house of convocation, expressly declared that in the New Testament, there is no mention made of any other ecclesiastical orders "than *deacons* or *ministers*, and *presbyters* or *bishops*."

\* *Christ. Obs.* Vol. III. p. 429.

† *Barlow's Genuine Remains*, p. 181.

I also asserted, that another book, drawn up and published by the same high authority, in 1542, taught, in the most explicit terms, a similar doctrine. To this Dr. *Bowden* replies that he has examined *Collier*, who undertakes to give an abstract of both these books, and that he does not find in him "a syllable of what I have quoted, but much to the contrary." My authorities are *Calamy's Defence of Moderate Nonconformity*, p. 91. and *Neal's History of the Puritans*, in both which the writers profess to quote the very words of the books in question: And whether a *direct and positive statement*, by authors of undoubted character, does not more than countervail the *silence* of a writer, who, as Episcopalians themselves acknowledge, is not to be depended on, let every impartial reader decide.

Now when it is considered, that those venerable reformers unquestionably drew up and published the *books* which have been just mentioned: When we find professor *Raignolds*, one of the most learned and pious episcopal divines of his day, and who lived within about half a century after *Cranmer* and his associates, expressly asserting that they did *not* place prelacy on the footing of divine right:\* When we find bishop *Stillingfleet*, in his *Irenicum*, and several other eminent episcopal divines, strongly asserting the same thing, not as their *opinion* merely, but as a *fact*: And when we find Dr. *White*, of *Pennsylvania*, now bishop of the episcopal church in that state, declaring, after the best examination that he had been able to give the subject, that those illustrious divines did not establish or defend prelacy as a matter of divine right†—When these things are considered, I presume every impartial judge will admit, that they form a mass of evidence incomparably more weighty than the opinions of Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*, with the partial and prejudiced *Collier* to aid them.

I asserted, that, about the year 1547, in an assembly of divines called by *Edward VI.* archbishop *Cranmer*, in answer to a question respecting the office of bishops and presbyters, replied, "*bishops and priests* were at one time, and were not *two things*, but *one office* in the beginning of Christ's religion." And that two other

\* See my former *Letters*, p. 160.

† *The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States considered.* 12mo. Philad. 1782.

bishops, together with Dr. *Redmayn*, and Dr. *Cox*, delivered a similar opinion in still stronger terms ; and that several of them quoted *Jerome* as a decisive authority in support of their opinion.

To this, Dr. *Bowden* replies, in the *first* place, that he can see nothing in *Cranmer's* answer inconsistent with Episcopal pre-eminence. Indeed ! Were any one to ask Dr. B. himself, as King *Edward* did that assembly, "Whether *bishops* or *priests* were first ; and if the *priests* were first, whether the priests *made* the bishops ?" would he answer as *Cranmer* did ; that bishops and priests were not two things in the beginning of Christ's religion, but one and the same office ? Could he lay his hand on his heart, and say that he would consider such an answer as agreeable to his principles ? The archbishop not only declares that the *names* of bishop and priest were interchangeably applied ; but that they were *one thing* or *one office* in the beginning of Christ's religion. The Bishop of *London's* answer, in the same assembly, is in a similar strain. "I think," says he, "the bishops were *first* ; and "yet I think it is not of importance whether the priest then made "the bishop, or the bishop the priest ; considering (after the sentence of St. *Jerome*) that in the beginning of the church there "was *no* (or if it were, very small) difference between a bishop "and a priest, especially touching the signification." The man who can say that this answer only asserts the indiscriminate application of *names* in the primitive church, must have a strange method of interpreting language.

Dr. B.'s *second* objection to my argument drawn from this answer, is, that the assembly, in which *Cranmer*, and his associates delivered these opinions, was not called in 1547, but *seven* years before, in the reign of *Henry VIII.* when the minds of the Reformers, just emerging from the darkness of Popery were unsettled and immature. He asserts, that afterwards, on further inquiry, they entertained a different opinion. In this representation also Mr. *How* concurs.

It is certain that *Stillingfleet*, with the original manuscripts relating to this subject in his hand, declares that this assembly was called by *Edward VI.* about the year 1547. It is certain that Bishop *Burnet* quotes the very same manuscripts, under the name of Bishop *Stillingfleet's*. And it is equally certain that the former

does not charge the latter with mistake in his date. I readily grant, however, that when the several passages of these two writers are carefully compared, it is not easy to decide on the correct date, with absolute certainty.\* But at whatever period this assembly was called, Bishop *Burnet* speaks of the answers which its members gave in the following strong terms of approbation. "This paper the reader will find in the collection, of which, though it be somewhat large, yet I thought such pieces were of too great importance not to be communicated to the world; since it is perhaps as great an evidence of the *ripeness of their* proceedings, as can be shown in *any church, or any age* of it."†

Both Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* assert that Archbishop *Cranmer* published a *Catechism* in 1548, and a *Sermon*, about the same time, in both which they assure us he delivered doctrines "as highly Episcopal as any thing can be." Dr. *Bowden* has given a short extract from the *latter* of these publications, and took care, no doubt, to select the strongest and most decisive passage he could find. But, strange to tell! this passage affords no proof that the archbishop believed in the divine institution of prelacy at all. It speaks of the ministry of the word being derived from the apostles by the imposition of hands. And do not many *Presbyterians* speak the same language? It speaks of the apostles making *bishops* and *priests*. And does not every *Presbyterian* grant that there were many presbyters in the apostles' days who had no pastoral charge, and who were, of course, no bishops? Is Dr. B. unable to understand this? or does he close his eyes against it? I take for granted that all *Cranmer's* "high church notions," as Mr. *How* calls them, if candidly examined, would be found to be of a similar kind.

Dr. *Bowden* admits that in the 13th year of the reign of *Elizabeth*, there was an act passed which admitted into the Church of *England*, those who had received ordination in the foreign reformed

\* Dr. *Bowden* undoubtedly mistakes when he dates this assembly in 1538, and assigns as a reason that a certain paper is signed by *Fox*, Bishop of *Hereford*, who died that year. Dr. B. is here confounding two very different things, as he will instantly see by comparing several passages in *Burnet*, Vol. I. p. 248. 289. *Collection XXI. Addenda V.*

† *Hist. Ref.* I. p. 289.

churches, on their subscribing the articles of faith. Now as there was no other, strictly speaking, than Presbyterian ordination in *any* of the foreign reformed churches, it is manifest that this was a great national acknowledgment of the validity of such ordinations. Dr. Bowden contends, however, that, from the language of *Strype*, in his *Annals*, it is evident that this act was not designed to recognize as valid the ordinations in *all* the reformed churches; but only to comprehend, besides the Papists, "such ministers as had received their ordination in *some* of those churches when they were in exile under Queen *Mary*." And by the phrase "*some* of the foreign reformed churches," Dr. B. thinks was probably meant, the churches of *Sweden*, *Denmark*, and *Bohemia*, which he insists were *episcopal* in their form. It will, hereafter, be shown, that none of these churches were *episcopal* in Dr. Bowden's sense of the word; and, therefore, that the ordinations in question, even if they had been performed in those churches, would have been nothing to his purpose. But this is not the worst part of the Doctor's blunder. It is notorious that not one of the exiles under the reign of *Mary* ever settled in *Sweden*, *Denmark*, or *Bohemia*, or ever received ordination in any of those countries. I appeal to *all* the accounts of their exile, by whomsoever written, for the truth of this fact. Some of those persecuted protestants went to *France* and *Flanders*; some to *Geneva*; and others to those parts of *Germany* and *Switzerland*, in which the reformation had taken place, particularly to *Embsen*, *Strasburg*, *Zurich* and *Frankfort*, in all which countries, no other ordination than that by *presbyters* existed. I repeat it, *none* of the exiles either *settled* in *Sweden*, *Denmark*, or *Bohemia*, or were *ordained* there. Was Dr. Bowden ignorant of this fact? Or, if he knew it, to what shall we ascribe his erroneous representation? But I forbear further to expose, what, I trust, was only an unintentional error.

As another proof that the reformers of the Church of *England* did not hold the excluding, *jure divino* doctrine of prelacy which many of their successors in that Church have espoused, I produced a public document under the hand of the Archbishop *Grindal*, in which he gave a formal license to a Presbyterian minister, as one who had been "*admitted and ordained to sacred orders, and the holy ministry, by the imposition of hands, according to the laudable form and rite of the reformed Church of Scotland.*"



To take away the force of this concession on the part of Archbishop *Grindal*, Dr. *Bowden*, with much zeal, urges several considerations.

The *first* is, that this prelate was not one of the *reformers* of the Church of *England*, at all; and that it is nothing less than imposition on my readers to place him among them. This is truly a wonderful assertion! Has Dr. *Bowden* ever read *Strype's* Life of *Grindal*? If he has not, I would recommend to him to procure and peruse it, before he undertakes again to write on this subject. From that work he will learn, that *Grindal* was an active, popular clergyman, and a decisive advocate of the reformation in the reign of *Edward VI.*; that he was nominated to a bishopric by that monarch; that he was so obnoxious to the Catholic party, on account of his exertions in the cause of the reformation, as to be compelled to leave the kingdom, on the accession of *Mary* to the throne; that, immediately on his return, he, with others, was employed by queen *Elizabeth* in reforming the liturgy and offices of the Church; that he was soon made bishop of *London*; that he was afterwards successively promoted to the Archbishoprics of *York* and *Canterbury*, in all which stations he signalized himself as a reformer. But, "he was not *archbishop* until the reign of *Elizabeth*." And was no man ever ranked among the reformers unless he was an *Archbishop*? Then *Cranmer* did not become a reformer until some years after he had begun to struggle for the purification of the Church; and *Ridley*, *Latimer*, and *Hooper*, to say nothing of several others, their illustrious contemporaries, were never reformers at all! But this plea is really beneath further notice.

Another mode of getting rid of this difficulty, to which Dr. *Bowden* resorts, is to attack the *character* of *Grindal*, and to endeavour to make it appear, that he was so "*fanatical*" and "*irregular*," that his opinion or decision on a subject of this kind ought not to be considered as of any weight. I am perfectly willing to leave this insinuation to be estimated as it deserves, by all who are tolerably acquainted with the history of the Reformation in *England*, and the agency of the pious archbishop in that glorious struggle.

But, one of the most extraordinary parts of Dr. *Bowden's* work, is that in which he attempts to show that the reformed Church of *Scotland*, as first established by *Knox* and his associates, was not Presbyterian but prelatical in its form. Nay, he goes so far as to

assert in conformity with the misrepresentations of *Sage*, *Collier*, *Spotswood*, and *Skinner*, that in that church ministerial "parity" was disclaimed; that superintendents with Episcopal jurisdiction "were established; and that Presbyterianism had no existence in that country until 1580, twenty years after the reformation was established." The man who can write thus, discovers a want of information, or a force of prejudice which renders him a much more proper object of compassion than of resentment. The statement is not only not true, but diametrically contrary to the truth, and advanced in direct opposition to all authentic testimony. This is so notoriously the case, that I did not suppose it possible for any well informed man, at the present day, to give such a representation as Dr. *Bowden* has given.

The model of the Reformed Church of *Scotland*, as established in 1560, appears in the *First Book of Discipline*, drawn up by *Knox* and others. In that book, in chapter *fourth*, the *ministry* is spoken of, as consisting of a single order, in the same language which has been common among Presbyterians ever since; nor is there the least hint given of different ranks or grades of ministers, much less of such an hierarchy as was then established in *England*. In the 7th chapter, *Ruling Elders* and *Deacons* are described, and their duties pointed out; the former to assist the minister in the government of his flock, and the latter to take care of the poor. And in other parts of the work, the government of the Church by *Kirk Sessions*, *Presbyteries*, and *Synods*, is expressly laid down. If this is not the essence of *Presbyterianism*, then I know not what is. It is true, in that book, the appointment of ten or twelve ministers, under the name of *superintendents* is recognized and directed. But it is as true, that the same book declares, that this appointment was made, not because *superintendents* were considered as of *divine institution*, or an order to be *observed perpetually* in the Kirk; but because they were compelled to resort to some such expedient, AT THAT TIME, when the deficiency of well qualified Protestant ministers was so great, that if some of the more able and pious had not been entrusted with much larger districts than single parishes, in which to preach the Gospel, to plant Churches, and to superintend the general interests of religion, the greater part of the country must have been given up, either to popish teachers, or to total ignorance. And it is as true, that the powers with which

those *superintendents* were invested, were, in all respects, essentially different from those of prelates. They did not *confirm*; they did not exclusively *ordain*; they had no episcopal *consecration*; they had none of the prerogatives of prelates; they were entirely subject to the synodical assemblies, consisting of *ministers* and *elders*; they were appointed by men who were known to be Presbyterians in principle; who, in the very act of appointing them, disclaimed prelacy as an institution of Christ; and who gave the strongest evidence that they viewed the subject in this light, by refusing to make the former bishops *superintendents*, lest their office should be abused, and afterwards degenerate into the “old power of the prelates.” In short, the superintendents were only the *agents* of the synods, for managing the affairs of the Church, in times of peculiar difficulty and peril; and whenever these times ceased, or rather before, their office was abolished. They were no more inconsistent with Presbyterian parity, than the practice of appointing *professors of divinity*, whose certificates shall be necessary to the introduction of every candidate into the ministry. Yet such professors have been appointed in every Presbyterian Church that was able to provide for their support.

In 1578, the *Second Book of Discipline* was agreed upon and published by the General Assembly of the Church of *Scotland*. In this book the plan of church government laid down, is as perfectly Presbyterian as ever was formed. Nay more, it contains a positive declaration that diocesan episcopacy is a “corruption;” that a scriptural bishop is the pastor of a single church or congregation; and that the plan of giving to certain ministers, under the name of *bishops*, a prelatical authority over a number of congregations, and their pastors, is a *popish* error. It even goes so far as to require that all such bishops then in the kingdom renounce their unscriptural title and authority, and submit to the Presbyterian order of the Church, or that they be *deposed* from all ecclesiastical office, and *excommunicated*. In all this, the assembly was supported by an act of parliament; and thus prelacy was by law abolished. And yet, “Presbyterianism had no existence in *Scotland* until 1580!” I charitably hope that Dr. *Bowden*, when he made this representation, had never read either the *First* or *Second Book of Discipline*, or the Acts of the General Assembly which accompanied those public documents.

It is readily granted that the reformers in *Scotland* carried on

this glorious work with much difficulty, and amidst great opposition. It is granted that in 1572, and again 1584, the most violent exertions were made, in the former case, by some ambitious nobleman; and in the latter, by the king, to restore prelacy; and that in both cases, there was a partial and nominal restoration of it for a few months, in the same manner as the progress of the Reformation was more than once, and grievously, interrupted in *England*. But it is notorious that, this was in opposition to the views and wishes of all the principal reformers. It is notorious, that, even in those intervals in which there were *nominal* bishops, candidates for the ministry were ordained, not by them, but *by the presbyteries*. And it is equally notorious that, from the first organization of presbyterianism in 1560, until it was ultimately and permanently established, the great body both of the clergy and laity, who manifested friendship to the *reformation* at all, were decided Presbyterians. For the truth of this representation, I appeal to the public and accredited documents of the church; I appeal to *Knox*, to *Galderwood*, to *Woodrow*, to *Crookshank*, to *any* historian, who is not carried away with the violent, I had almost said insane prejudice of *Sage*, *Spotswood*, and *Collier*, by whom subsequent writers, who ought to have known better, have suffered themselves to be misled. Even Dr. *Heylin*, with all the bitterness of his prejudice, in his *History of Presbyterianism*, gives a view of the reformation in *Scotland* which I cannot help thinking will excite a blush in Dr. B. if he should ever peruse it, and should remember what he himself has written.

Though *Heylin* was a violent enemy of every thing like *Presbytery*; and though he wished to make it appear that the first Scottish reformers did not admit of ministertal parity, in the strict sense of the word; yet he was forced to acknowledge that they adopted a plan of church government, of which the "predominant" features were Presbyterian. And he confesses, further, that even the small deviations from the strict Presbyterian model which took place, were admitted by *Knox* on account of the then "*unsettled state of the Church*."\* The same historian, in another work, declares more strongly, "Being once settled in orderly and constant hierarchy, they (the *Scotch*) held the same, until the refor-

\* *Hist. Presbyter.* B. v. § 29.

“mation began by *Knox*; when he and his associates, approving  
 “the *Genevan* Platform, took the advantage of the minority of King  
 “*James VI.* to introduce *Presbyterian* discipline, and suppress the  
 “*Bishops.*”\*

Accordingly, soon after the first establishment of the reformation in *Scotland*, *Beza*, whose warm attachment to *Presbyterianism* is universally known, wrote to *Knox* in the following language.  
 “But I would have you, my dear *Knox*, and the other brethren,  
 “to remember that which is before your eyes; that *as bishops*  
 “*brought forth the papacy*; so false bishops, the relics of popery,  
 “shall bring epicurism into the world. They that desire the good  
 “and safety of the church, let them take heed of *this pest*; and  
 “seeing you *have put that plague to flight*, I heartily pray you  
 “never to admit again; although it may seem plausible, under  
 “the pretence of keeping *unity*; which pretence deceived the an-  
 “cient fathers, even the best of them.”†

*Dr. Bowden* seems to think that, if *bishops* had been the leading reformers in *Scotland*, as they were in *England*, prelacy would have been retained in the former, as well as in the latter. This is only saying that even good men, who enjoy high ecclesiastical pre-eminence, and corresponding revenues, when two plans of reformation are offered them, will be most likely to embrace that which will secure the continuance of their honours and emoluments. And does *Dr. Bowden* really think that this affords a solid argument in favour of prelacy? I cannot possibly suppose a gentleman of his character to be so far gone in absurdity. Besides, the doctor does not appear to know, that three Scotch prelates, viz. the bishops of *Orkney*, *Galloway*, and *Caithness*, DID embrace the reformation, and became *Presbyterian*, or *parochial* bishops. And, what is still more worthy of notice, it is well known, not only that *Knox* himself was in episcopal orders, and was a popular preacher in *England*, in the reign of *Edward VI.*; but also that a *bishopric* was offered him, which he refused, because he considered prelacy as unlawful; or as having “*quid commune cum anti-christo.*”‡ Accordingly, when *John Douglass* was made *tulchan* (or *nominal*)

\* *Cosmographie*, p. 332.

† *Epist.* 79.

‡ *FULLER'S Lives of the Divines*,

Bishop of *St. Andrews*, *Knox* utterly refused to ordain him, denouncing anathemas both against the giver and the receiver. And, when this refusal was imputed to unworthy motives, he publicly declared, in a sermon, on the next sabbath, "I have refused a greater bishopric than ever it was ; and might have had it with the favour of greater men than he hath this : but I did and do repine, for discharge of my conscience, that the church of *Scotland* be not subject to *that order*."\*

Let us now pass from the reformers of *Great Britain* to those of the continent of *Europe*.

Dr. *Bowden* would persuade us that *Luther* also believed in the divine right of diocesan episcopacy. Of this reformer he speaks in the following terms. "As to *Luther*, he professes that if the popish bishops would cease to persecute the gospel," he and those of his communion, "would acknowledge them as their fathers, and willingly obey their authority, which (says he) *we find supported by the word of God*." Consequently, in his and their estimation, "episcopacy was an apostolic institution." *Letter 15*. Dr. *Bowden* has not given us the least hint in what part of *Luther's* writings this declaration is to be found ;† and I shall certainly require to see it with my own eyes, and to trace its connexion, before it is admitted as an authentic testimony of that reformer's opinion. I make this demand with the more confidence, and with a deeper conviction of its justice, because, in turning over the works of *Luther*, I find numerous passages, which speak, directly and unequivocally, an opposite language : passages which Dr. *Bowden* certainly could not have been acquainted with, or he would have been ashamed to pen the above cited paragraph.

It were easy to fill several letters with quotations, strongly in point, from this illustrious man. The following, however, will suffice.

In his treatise, *De Abroganda Missa Privata*, contained in the second volume of his works,‡ remarking on *Titus* 1. 5. he makes

\* *Calderwood*.

† Really, considering the severity with which Dr. *Bowden* censures me for not being in all cases sufficiently attentive to my references, and his formal and solemn promises to be more "scholar like" himself, this omission occurs by far too frequently.

‡ My edition of *Luther's* works is in seven volumes, folio, printed at *Wittemberg*, 1546—1552.



the following explicit declaration. “ Here, if we believe that the  
 “ Spirit of Christ spake and directed by *Paul*, we must acknow-  
 “ ledge that it is a divine appointment, that in every city there be  
 “ a plurality of bishops, or at least one. It is manifest also, that,  
 “ by the same divine authority, he makes *presbyters* and *bishops*  
 “ to be one and the same thing; for he says that presbyters are to  
 “ be ordained in every city, if any can be found who are blame-  
 “ less, because a bishop ought to be blameless.”

In his treatise *Adversus Falso Nominatum Ordinem Episcoporum*,\* *Oper. Tom. Ibid.* p. 342. remarking on the same passage of scripture, he speaks as follows—“ *Paul* writes to *Titus* that he  
 “ should ordain elders in every city. Here, I think, no one can  
 “ deny that the apostle represents *bishop* and *elder* as signifying  
 “ the same thing. Since he commands *Titus* to ordain elders in  
 “ every city; and because a *bishop* ought to be blameless, he calls  
 “ an *elder* by the same title. It is, therefore, plain what *Paul*  
 “ means by the term *bishop*, viz. a man eminently good and up-  
 “ right, of proper age, who hath a virtuous wife, and children in  
 “ subjection in the fear of God. He wills such an one to preside  
 “ over the congregation, in the ministry of the word, and the ad-  
 “ ministration of the sacraments. Is there any one who attends  
 “ to these words of the apostle, together with those which precede  
 “ and follow, so hardened as to deny this sense of them, or to per-  
 “ vert them to another meaning?”

In the same work, p. 344, 345, he thus speaks—“ But let us  
 “ hear *Paul* concerning this divine ordination. For *Luke* in the  
 “ 20th chapter of the *Acts* of the apostles, writes concerning  
 “ him in this manner. *From Miletus, having sent messengers to*  
 “ *Ephesus, he collected the elders of the church, to whom, when*  
 “ *they had come to him, he thus said—Take heed to yourselves*  
 “ *and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you*  
 “ *overseers, &c.* But what new thing is this? Is *Paul* insane?  
 “ *Ephesus* was but a single city, and yet *Paul* openly calls all the

\* Whoever will take the trouble to look into this treatise, which is expressly written against *bishops*, as a separate and pre-eminent order, will find *Luther* decidedly maintaining that a *Scriptural bishop* was nothing more than a *pastor* of a single congregation; and strongly inveighing against the doctrine that *bishops* are an order above pastors, as a *Popish* error.

“ presbyters or elders, by the common style of *bishops*. But perhaps *Paul* had never read the legends, the miserably patched up fables, and the sacred decretals of the *papists* ; for how otherwise would he have dared to place a plurality of bishops over one city, and to denominate all the *presbyters* of that one city, *bishops* ; when they were not all prelates, nor supported a train of dependents, and pack horses, but were poor and humble men. But, to be serious, you see plainly, that the Apostle *Paul* calls those alone *bishops* who *preach the Gospel* to the people, and *administer the sacraments*, as, in our times, parish ministers and preachers are wont to do. These, therefore, though they preach the Gospel in small villages and hamlets, yet, as faithful ministers of the word, I believe, beyond all doubt, possess, of right, the title and name of bishop.”

A little after, commenting on *Philip. i. 1.* he says—“ Behold *Paul*, speaking of *Philippi*, which was a single city, salutes all the believers, together with the bishops. These were, beyond all doubt, the *presbyters*, whom he had been wont to appoint in every city. This now is the third instance in the writings of *Paul*, in which we see what God and the Holy Spirit hath appointed, viz. that those *alone*, truly and *of right*, are to be called *bishops* who have the *care of a flock* in the ministry of the word, the care of the poor, and the administration of the sacraments, as is the case with *parish ministers* in our age.”

In the same work, p. 346, commenting on *1 Peter v. 1.* he says—“ Here you see that *Peter*, in the same manner as *Paul* had done, uses the terms *presbyter* and *bishop* to signify the same thing. He represents those as bishops who teach the people, and preach the word of God ; and he makes them all of equal power, and forbids them to conduct themselves as if they were lords, or to indulge a spirit of domination over their flocks. He calls himself a *fellow presbyter*, plainly teaching, by this expression, that *all parish ministers*, and *bishops* of cities, were of equal authority among themselves ; that in what pertained to the office of *bishop*, no one could claim any superiority over another ; and that he was their fellow presbyter, having no more power in his own city than others had in theirs, or than every one of them had in his own congregation.”

In his *Commentary* on *1 Peter v. 1. Oper. Tom. v. p. 481.* he

thus speaks—"The word *presbyter* signifies an *elder*. It has the same meaning as the term *senators*, that is, men who on account of their age, prudence, and experience, bear sway in society.—In the same manner Christ calls his ministers, and his senate, whose duty it is to administer spiritual government, to preach the word, and to watch over the church, he calls them *elders*. Wherefore let it not surprise you, if this name is *now* very differently applied; for of those who are *at present* called by this name, the scriptures say nothing. Therefore banish the present order of things from your eyes, and you will be able to conceive of the fact as it was. When *Peter*, or either of the other apostles, came to any city where there were Christians, out of the number he chose one or more aged men, of blameless lives, who had wives and children, and were well acquainted with the scriptures, to be set over the rest. These were called *presbyters*, that is *elders*, whom both *Peter* and *Paul* also style *bishops*, that we may know that bishops and presbyters were *the same*."

Again, in his commentary on the second verse of the same chapter, he says, "I have often said, that if we would wish to have the Christian commonwealth rightly established, it is necessary that there be, *in every city, three or four bishops*, who should superintend the church, and, if any thing should be at any time delinquent or lost, restore it."

But this is not all. *Luther* declared his principles on this subject by his *practice*, as well as by his *writings*. He was ordained a presbyter in the Romish church, in the year 1507, in the 24th year of his age.\* As a presbyter, he considered himself as authorized to ordain others to the gospel ministry; and accordingly, soon after assuming the character of a reformer, he actually did ordain.† Nay, he went a step further. Though a firm believer in the doctrine of the primitive parity of ministers, he seems to have considered it as *not unlawful* to have diocesan *bishops* or *superintendents* in the church, when either the form of the civil govern-

\* Vid. *Gerhard, De Ministerio*, p. 147, 148. The same fact is also attested by *Zanchius. In IV. Præcep.* p. 774. *Gerhard*, who lived not long after *Luther*, expressly asserts that he was ordained a presbyter, with the imposition of hands in the year above mentioned.

† *Melchior Adam*, 129.

ment, or the habits or wishes of the people rendered it desirable; always, however, placing their appointment on the ground of *human expediency alone*. Accordingly, in the year 1542, when an episcopal seat within the electorate of *Saxony* became vacant, *Luther*, at the request of the elector, though himself nothing more than a presbyter, consecrated *Amsdorff* bishop of that diocese.\* But if *Luther* had believed in "the apostolic institution of diocesan episcopacy," as *Dr. Bowden* tells us he did, could he have acted thus? It is not possible. It would have been a grossness of inconsistency and dishonesty with which that holy reformer was never charged.

Nor did *Luther* abandon either his principles or his practice, on this subject, to his last hour. This appears from the following testimony of his biographer, concerning what occurred a few days before his death. "From the 29th day of January till the 17th day of February, he was continually occupied about the matters of concord and agreement of the aforesaid noble princes, bringing it unto a most godly conclusion. And besides his great labour in so necessary a cause, he preached in the mean time, four worthy sermons, and two times communicated with the Christian church there, in the holy supper of the Lord; and in the latter communion, which was on Sunday, he ordained two ministers of the word of God, after the apostles' manner."† This great reformer, then, in the solemn anticipation of death, and when he expected, in a few days, to appear before his eternal Judge, still claimed and exercised the right of ordaining ministers, as he had done for near thirty years; and what is more, his biographers, who were eminent divines of the *Lutheran* denomination, and *Luther's* most intimate friends, declare, that, in their judgment, as well as that of their illustrious chief, ordination by a *presbyter* was in conformity with "the apostles' manner."

Nor did *Luther* stand alone, among the churches of his denomination, in maintaining the primitive parity of Gospel ministers. This is evident from the *confessions*, and other ecclesiastical

\* *Melchoir Adam*, 150.

† "The true history of the Christian departing of the Rev. Dr. Martin *Luther*; collected by *Justus Jonas*, *Michael Celi*, and *Joannes Aurifaber*, which were present thereat."

documents, which were early set forth, and which have been ever since received by those churches.

Among the standards of the *Lutheran* churches, the *Augustan Confession* holds the first rank. It was drawn up by *Melancthon*, approved by *Luther*, and formally presented to the Emperor *Charles V.*, by those reformers, and their adherents, in the year 1530, as a summary of the doctrines received by them. In this celebrated *Confession* there is a reference to a charge brought against the *Lutherans* by the *papists*, that they had abolished the order of *bishops*, as a superior grade of clergy. The fact is not *denied*, but *defended*; and that on the ground that it was necessary to obey God rather than man; and to be guided by scripture rather than human traditions. It is observable, also, that in this *Confession*, the preaching of the gospel, and the administration of the sacraments, are represented as the *highest* functions of the ministry, and the right to perform these as including all other ministerial power.\*

The work next in authority, as a compend of Lutheran doctrine, is the famous *Defence of the Augustan Confession*, composed by *Melancthon*, in the year 1530; presented to the Emperor at *Augsburg*, the same year; acknowledged as the creed of the protestants there assembled; published in 1531, and solemnly adopted as one of the standards of the Lutheran church, by her principal civil and ecclesiastical guides of that day.—In the 7th chapter of this *defence*, the following passage is found. Speaking of *episcopacy*, they say, “Concerning this point, we have often declared, in the present convention, that we earnestly desire to retain the *ecclesiastical polity*, and those *grades* which are established in the church, *although brought in by human authority*. For we know that this form of ecclesiastical discipline, as it is described in the ancient canons, was introduced by the fathers of the church with good and useful counsel.”—Here is one of the strongest testimonies imaginable in favour of the doctrine of primitive parity. In a *Confession of Faith*, drawn up and subscribed by some of the most eminently pious and learned divines that ever lived, while they express a strong predilection in favour of that episcopal regimen which they found in the church, and

\* See the article on *Ecclesiastical power* throughout.

which had been long established ; they still declare, that they consider it as “ brought in by human authority ”—and as resting on no other ground than “ the good and useful counsel of their fathers.”

The work next in authority in the Lutheran churches, is the famous collection of *articles* drawn up and adopted at *Smalkald*, in 1537. They were composed by *Luther*, subscribed by him, and also by *Melancthon*, *Jonas*, *Bugenhagius*, *Myconius*, and many other illustrious Lutheran divines ; and solemnly acknowledged, at a general meeting of protestants, in the city whose name they bear, as containing a summary of their theological and ecclesiastical principles. In those articles, the following declarations are found. “ It is clear, even from the confession of our adversaries, that this power, (to wit of preaching, dispensing the sacraments, excommunication, and absolution,) is common to all that are set over the churches, whether they be called pastors, presbyters, or bishops. Wherefore *Jerome* plainly affirms, that there is no difference between a bishop and a presbyter ; but that every pastor is a bishop. Here *Jerome* teaches that the distinction of degrees between a bishop, and a presbyter or pastor, was only appointed by human authority, and the thing itself imports no less ; for on both bishop and presbyter is laid the same duty, and the same charge. Only ordination in AFTER TIMES made the difference between bishop and pastor. By divine right there is no difference between them.”\*

The last public document of the Lutheran church, which I shall quote, as supporting our doctrine, is a *syllabus of controverted points*, digested out of the received Creeds and Confessions of that church, and published with those Creeds and Confessions by authority. In chapter 18. § 4. of this work, we find the following explicit declaration. “ Ordination to the work of the ministry is necessary in a church at liberty ; but this act does not belong to bishops alone, nor can it with propriety be called a sacrament. We hold this in opposition to the papists, and also to certain English Episcopalians, as Carleton, Hall, and Bilson, who dis-

\* *Articuli Smalcaldici Christianæ Doctrinæ—Scripti à D. Martino Luthero, Anno 1537—Art. De Potestate et Jurisdictione Episcoporum.*



“tinguish between *presbyters* and *bishops* as to the point of ordination.”\*

But we may go further. Almost ALL the public *Confessions* which were drawn up and adopted at the æra of the reformation, contain the same doctrine, and speak the same language. Mr. *How* indeed declares, that “the universal language at the time of the reformation,” was in favour of the apostolical institution of prelacy, and offering no other plea but that of *necessity* for establishing a different system of ecclesiastical order. Dr. *Bowden* makes, in substance, the same assertion. What these gentlemen will think of themselves, and of their representation, after perusing the following extracts, is not for me to decide.

In the *Confession of Saxony*, drawn up in 1551, by *Melancthon*, and subscribed by all the *Saxon* churches, the following passages are found. Art. 11. “We do also retain in our churches the public rite of ordination, whereby the ministry of the gospel is commended to those that are truly chosen, whose manners and doctrine we do first thoroughly examine. These things pertain to the ministry,—to teach the gospel; to administer the sacraments; to give absolution, to them that ask it, and do not persevere in manifest offences; to ordain ministers of the gospel, being rightly called and examined; to exercise the judgment of the church after a lawful manner, upon those who are guilty of manifest crimes in manners or in doctrine; and to pronounce the sentence of excommunication against them that are stubborn, and again to absolve and pardon them that do repent. That these things may be done orderly, *there be also consistories appointed in our churches.*”†

The *Confession of Wirtemberg*, drawn up in 1552, by order of the duke of *Wirtemberg*, and presented by his ambassadors to the council of *Trent*, as a specimen of protestant doctrine, contains the following declarations. Art. 20. “Christ, in his church, hath instituted ministers who should preach his gospel, and administer the sacraments. Neither is it to be permitted to every one to

\* *Appendix ad Libros Ecclesiæ Lutheranæ Symbolicos*, &c. p. 195.

† *Harmony of Confessions*. Sect 10.

“usurp a public ministry in the church, without a lawful calling. “*Paul* writeth that a *bishop* ought to be apt to teach ; and *Jerome* teacheth that a *priest* and a *bishop* are all one. Therefore it is evident, that except a *priest* be ordained in the church to the ministry of teaching, he cannot rightly take unto him neither the name of a *priest*, nor the name of a *bishop*.”\*

The *French Confession*, formed in 1559, and subscribed by all the pastors of the protestant churches in that kingdom, contains the following explicit declarations. *Art. 29.* “We believe that this true church ought to be governed by that regiment or discipline, which our Lord Jesus Christ hath established, to wit, so that there be in it *pastors*, *elders*, and *deacons*, that the *purity of doctrine* may be retained, *vices suppressed*, the *poor*, and others that be in misery, according to their necessity, may be provided for ; and that there may be holy meetings, for the edifying both of small and great.” *Art. 30.* “We believe that all true pastors, in what place soever they be placed, have the same and equal authority given unto them, under Jesus Christ, the only head, and the chief and alone universal bishop ; and that, therefore, it is not lawful for any church to challenge unto itself dominion or sovereignty over any other church.”†

The *Belgic Confession*, formed in 1566, contains the following explicit and decisive articles. *Art. 30.* “We believe, that this church ought to be ruled and governed by that spiritual regiment, which God himself hath delivered in his word, so that there be placed in it *pastors* and *ministers*, purely to preach, and rightly to administer the holy sacraments—That there be also in it *Seniors* (or *elders*) and *deacons*, of whom the senate of the church might consist, that, by these means, true religion might be preserved, and sincere doctrine in every place retained and spread abroad ; that vicious and wicked men might, after a spiritual manner, be rebuked, amended, and as it were by the bridle of discipline kept within their compass ; that the poor in like manner, and those that be afflicted, may be relieved, either with aid or comfort, according to the several necessities of every one. For then shall all things in the church be done in due and con-

\* *Harm. of Confessions*, Sect. 11.

† *Ibid.* Sect. 11.

“ venient order, when faithful and godly men are chosen to have  
 “ the government of the same, even as St. *Paul* hath prescribed in  
 “ 1 *Timothy* 3, and in *Titus* 1.” Art. 31. “ We believe that  
 “ the *ministers, elders, and deacons*, ought to be called to those  
 “ their functions, and by the lawful election of the church to be ad-  
 “ vanced into those rooms, earnest prayer being made unto God,  
 “ and after the order and manner which is set down unto us in the  
 “ word of God. This especially every one ought to take diligent  
 “ heed of, that he do not by unlawful means thrust himself into  
 “ those offices. For every one must wait until he be called of God  
 “ himself, that he may have a certain testimony of his vocation,  
 “ and may know that it is from the Lord. Yet in what place of  
 “ the world soever the ministers of the word of God do keep, they  
 “ have all of them *the same and equal power and authority* ; being  
 “ all of them *equally* the ministers of Christ, the only universal Bi-  
 “ shop and Head of the Church.”\*

The second *Helvetic Confession* was drawn up by the pastors of *Zurich*, in the year 1566, and subscribed not only by themselves, but also by the churches of *Geneva, Hungary, and Scotland*. In the eighteenth chapter of that confession, which is entitled, *Of the ministers of the church, their institution and offices*, are found the following declarations—“ The apostles of Christ do term all  
 “ those which believe in Christ, *priests*, but not in regard of their  
 “ ministry, but because all the faithful, being made *kings* and  
 “ *priests* by Christ, may offer up spiritual sacrifices unto God.  
 “ The *ministry*, then, and *priesthood* are things far different one  
 “ from the other. For priesthood, as we said even now, is common  
 “ to all Christians, so is not the ministry. And we have not taken  
 “ away the ministry from the church, because we have thrust the  
 “ Popish priesthood out of the church of Christ. For surely in  
 “ the New Covenant of Christ, there is no longer *any such*  
 “ *priesthood as was in the ancient church of the Jews*, which  
 “ had an external anointing, holy garments, and very many cere-  
 “ monies *which were figures and types of Christ*, who by his  
 “ coming, *fulfilled and abolished them*. And he himself remaineth  
 “ the only priest for ever ; and we do not communicate the name  
 “ of *priest* to any of the ministers, lest we should detract any thing

\* *Harmony of Confessions*, Sect 11.

“ from Christ. Now the power that is given to the ministers of  
“ the church is the same and alike in all : and, in the beginning,  
“ the *bishops* or *elders*, did, with a common consent and labour,  
“ govern the church. No man lifted up himself above another ;  
“ none usurped greater authority or power over his fellow bishops ;  
“ for they remembered the words of the Lord, *He which will be*  
“ *the chiefest among you let him be your servant*. They kept in  
“ themselves by humility, and did mutually aid one another in the  
“ government and preservation of the church. Notwithstanding  
“ for orders’ sake, some one of the ministers called the assembly  
“ together, propounded unto the assembly the matters to be con-  
“ sulted of, gathered together the voices or sentences of the rest,  
“ and, to be brief, as much as lay in him, provided that there might  
“ arise no confusion. So did Saint *Peter*, as we read in the  
“ *Acts* ; who yet, for all that, was neither above the rest, nor had  
“ greater authority than the rest. Very true, therefore, is that  
“ saying of *Cyprian* the martyr, in his book *De Simpl. Cler.*—  
“ *The same doubtless were the rest of the apostles that Peter was,*  
“ *having an equal fellowship with him both in honour and power ;*  
“ *but the beginning thereof proceedeth from unity, to signify*  
“ *unto us that there is but one church.*—Saint *Jerome*, upon the  
“ epistle of *Paul* to *Titus*, hath a saying not much unlike this—  
“ *Before that by the instinct of the devil there was partaking in*  
“ *religion, the churches were governed by the common advice*  
“ *of the presbyters ; but after that every one thought, that those*  
“ *whom he baptized were his own, and not Christ’s, it was decreed*  
“ *that one of the presbyters should be chosen and set over the*  
“ *rest, who should have the care of the whole church laid upon*  
“ *him, and by whose means all schism should be removed.* Yet  
“ *Jerome* doth not avouch this as an order set down of God : for  
“ straightway after, he addeth—*Even as, saith he, the presbyters*  
“ *knew by the continual custom of the church that they were sub*  
“ *ject to him that is set over them—so the bishops must know*  
“ *that they are above the presbyters, rather by custom, than by*  
“ *the prescript rule of God’s truth ; and they should have the*  
“ *government of the church in common with them.* Thus far  
“ *Jerome*. Now, therefore, no man can forbid by any right, that  
“ we may return to the old appointment of God, and rather receive  
“ that, than the custom devised by men.—Furthermore, no man

“ought to usurp the honour of the ecclesiastical ministry, that is  
 “to say, greedily to pluck it to him by bribes, or any evil shifts,  
 “or of his own accord. But let the ministers of the church be  
 “called and chosen by a lawful and ecclesiastical election and  
 “vocation.—And those which are chosen, *let them be ordained*  
 “*of the elders, with public prayer, and laying on of hands.* We  
 “do condemn all those which run of their own accord, being nei-  
 “ther chosen, sent, nor ordained.”\*

The *Confession of Bohemia*, drawn up about 1573, in chapter 9th, contains the following passage—“Ministers ought not of their  
 “own accord to press forward in that calling; but ought, accord-  
 “ing to the example of the Lord and the apostles, to be lawfully  
 “appointed and ordained thereunto. And again, these ought to  
 “be proved and tried by examination, and so afterwards, prayers  
 “and fastings being made, they may be *confirmed or approved of*  
 “*the elders by laying on of hands.*”—Chapter 14. “The power  
 “of the keys is committed to the church of Christ, and to the minis-  
 “ters thereof unto the end of the world; that they should not  
 “only, by preaching, publish the holy Gospel, although they  
 “should do this especially, that is, should show forth that word of  
 “true comfort, and the joyful message of peace, and new tidings  
 “of that favour which God offereth; but also that, to the believing  
 “and unbelieving, they should publicly or privately denounce or  
 “make known, to *them* his favour, to *these* his wrath, and that to  
 “all in general, or to every one in particular, that they may wisely  
 “receive some into the house of God, to the communion of saints,  
 “and drive some out from thence, and may so, through the per-  
 “formance of their ministry, hold in their hand the sceptre of  
 “Christ his kingdom, and use the same to the government of  
 “Christ his sheep. And all these things are done by the faith-  
 “ful shepherds of souls in the Lord’s stead, not doing this of them-  
 “selves, but upon Christ his commandment; not by their own  
 “and proper virtue, but by Christ’s, and by the efficacy of his  
 “word and sacraments, as those that are stewards and dispensers  
 “of the mysteries of God, and ministers only. In the administra-  
 “tion of which things they may use some seemly and indifferent  
 “ceremonies, that is, which are no way necessary, such as laying

\* *Harmony of Confessions*, Sect. 11.

“ on hands, or reaching out the right hand ; on else they may omit  
 “ them.—This power of his sceptre and spirit hath the Lord  
 “ granted and delivered to the holy apostles, *and in them to all*  
 “ *ministers of churches lawfully ordained*, that they might exercise  
 “ in his stead : and he granted it to them by these words, *As the*  
 “ *Father hath sent me, so do I send you also*. By this we may  
 “ understand that these keys, or this divine function of the Lord’s,  
 “ is committed and granted to those that have the charge of souls,  
 “ and to each several ecclesiastical society,\* whether small or great.  
 “ Moreover, every Christian so often as he needeth these keys of  
 “ the Lord, ought to require them particularly for himself of the  
 “ pastors of souls of that church or fellowship, of which himself is  
 “ a part, and to which he belongeth ; and that he use them with full  
 “ confidence, no otherwise than if he had received them of Christ  
 “ himself, seeing that Christ hath delivered them unto the pastors.  
 “ This is also taught and handled, that the priests ought not to use  
 “ these keys of the Lord, otherwise than according to the meaning  
 “ and will of Christ expressed in his word.”†

From public *Confessions*, drawn up by the reformers, let us descend to *individual opinions* expressed by those illustrious witnesses for the truth, in different countries. Of these the following specimen will be sufficient.

*Ursinus*, a learned German divine, contemporary with *Luther* and *Melancthon*, speaks the same language. “ Ministers,” says he, “ are either *immediately* called of God or *mediately* through  
 “ the instrumentality of the church. Of the former class, were  
 “ *prophets* and *apostles*. Of the latter class there are five kinds,  
 “ *viz. Evangelists, bishops or pastors, teachers, ruling elders, and*  
 “ *deacons*. *Evangelists* are ministers appointed to go forth and  
 “ preach the Gospel to a number of churches. *Bishops* are minis-  
 “ ters ordained to preach the word of God, and administer the  
 “ sacraments, in particular churches. *Teachers* are ministers ap-  
 “ pointed merely to fulfil the function of *teaching* in particular  
 “ churches. *Ruling elders* are ministers elected by the voice of

\* This is explained by a note on the article in the following words—  
 “ That is to *Presbyteries* or *Consistories*, which stand of pastors and  
 “ elders; and unto whom properly the dispensing and ordering of the  
 “ keys and ecclesiastical censures do belong.”

† *Harmony of Confessions*, Sect. 11.



“ the church, to assist in *conducting discipline*, and to order a  
 “ variety of necessary matters in the church. *Deacons* are minis-  
 “ ters elected by the church, to *take care of the poor*, and to dis-  
 “ tribute alms \*

The very learned *Musculus*, also of *Germany*, a reformer contemporary with *Luther*, and who embraced his principles, having proved from *Acts* xx. *Philip*. i. 1. *Titus* i. 5. and *1 Peter* v. 1. that, in the apostles' times a *bishop* and *presbyter* were *all one*, adds as follows : “ But after the apostles' times, when, amongst  
 “ the elders of the church, (as *Jerome* saith,) schisms arose, and,  
 “ as I verily think, they began to strive for the pre-eminence by  
 “ little and little, they began to choose one out of the number of the  
 “ elders, who was placed above the rest, in a higher degree, and  
 “ called bishop. But whether that *device of man* profited the  
 “ church or no, those who lived in succeeding times could better  
 “ judge, than when it first began. If *Jerome* had seen as much as  
 “ those who came after him, he would, no doubt, have concluded  
 “ that this was never brought in to take away schism, but was a  
 “ project of the devil to waste and destroy the *primitive ministry*,  
 “ appointed for feeding the Lord's flock.” Again, he declares,  
 “ Whence it evidently appears that, in the times of the apostles,  
 “ elders, pastors, and bishops were one and the same, in God's  
 “ church.”—“ It is beyond all dispute, that the first and apostolic  
 “ church, was, by the apostles, so constituted, that the elders of the  
 “ church did exercise a common episcopal care over the Lord's  
 “ flock, and enjoyed the same function of teaching and governing,  
 “ and were therein subject to no head or president.”†

*Zsegedin*, an eminent Lutheran divine of *Hungary*, contemporary with *Luther* and *Calvin*, delivers, in substance, the same doctrine. The following quotations are decisive. “ May one pastor  
 “ preside over other pastors? The practice, indeed, hath obtained  
 “ that presbyters should preside, each one in his own college, and  
 “ that this person alone should be called *bishop*. This, however,  
 “ arose from *human custom*, and is *by no means* supported by the  
 “ authority of scripture. And from perverting the signification  
 “ of a word this evil hath arisen, that, as if *all presbyters* were not

\* *Ursin. Corpus. Doctrinæ*, Par. III. p. 721.

† *Loci Communes de Offic. Minist.* p. 360—362.

“*colleagues*, and called to the *same function*, one, under the pretext of a new title, arrogated to himself a dominion over others.”\* Again, “Hence learn that all pastors are *equal* both in their *vocation* and *function*; and that there is no *prelatical* tyranny constituted. It is necessary, indeed, that, among brethren, there should be some one to convene the college, to state the business, and, when it is necessary, to write and speak in the name of the college. But this person, to avoid the odium of *prelatical tyranny*, may be called *superintendent*. The power of *superintendents* ought to be temporary and definite, *not perpetual*.”† Again, “Is the title of *bishop* common to *all ministers* of the word? Yes, certainly. For *Paul*, in the first chapter of the epistle to the *Philippians*, represents many bishops as belonging to one church. The titles *bishop*, *pastor*, *presbyter*, are, therefore, *synonymous*. Bishop is a term expressive of *duty* and *care*, not of *dignity*.”—Again, “The *popish* bishops are false bishops; not successors of the *apostles*, but of *Balaam*, cruel, heretical, enemies of Christ, who esteem the episcopate on account of its introducing them to great riches. While *Paul* comprehends under the name of *bishop*, *all pastors*, the *papists* will have it that none is to be held as a bishop but the one who is chosen by the college to preside over his brethren.”‡

The learned *Junius*, an eminent Dutch professor of divinity, who lived at the commencement of the reformation in *Holland*, and who was, of course, nearly contemporary with *Luther*,§ wrote very fully and explicitly in support of Presbyterian principles. In his work entitled *Ecclesiastici*, he decidedly, and with great learning, maintains, that pastors, ruling elders, and deacons, are the only three scriptural orders of church officers; that pastors, or ministers of the word and sacraments, are the highest order, and, of course, are invested with the power of *ordaining*, that the second class are men of distinguished piety and prudence, chosen from among

\* *Loci Communes*, p. 197. Fol. Quint. Basil. 1608.

† *Loci Communes*, p. 197

‡ Ibid. 202.

§ Of this illustrious reformer, it is related, that he preached in the city of *Antwerp* at midnight, with no other light than that which was produced by the flames of burning martyrs.

the members of the church, to assist the pastor in the *government* of the church ; and that the *deacons* are appointed to collect and distribute the *alms* of the church. He affirms that these three orders are set forth in scripture, and existed in the primitive church. He declares that a scriptural *bishop* was the pastor of a single congregation; and that giving this title, by way of eminence, to one of the pastors in a city or district, was a practice introduced *after* the time of the apostles, and is to be considered as a departure from the primitive model.\*

The same writer in his *Animadversions* on cardinal *Bellarmino*, is still more pointed and positive against the claims of diocesan episcopacy, and in favour of the Presbyterian doctrine of parity.—It is really amusing to trace the popish cardinal through all his reasonings and cavils, and to observe what a remarkable coincidence there is between him and Dr. *Bowden* ; and it is no less worthy of notice that *Junius*, though he wrote nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, and, of course, many years before the synod of *Dort*, argues as uniformly and strongly in favour of Presbyterian principles, as any champion of presbytery that ever appeared. I cannot forbear particularly to observe, that *Bellarmino* turns in every direction, and strains every nerve, to set aside the testimony of *Jerome* ; and for this purpose, in almost every instance, employs exactly the same arguments and the same subterfuges with Dr. *Bowden* : While *Junius* pronounces and proves his arguments to be futile, and his subterfuges unavailing, and the testimony of that celebrated father to be precisely what the friends of parity have ever considered it.†

The learned *Sadeel*, a French protestant divine, contemporary with *Calvin* and *Beza*, has frequently been represented by episcopal writers, as friendly to their claims, and even as acknowledging the apostolical institution of episcopacy. What the opinions of this reformer really were, will appear from the following quotations. In answer to a learned *popish* doctor, who, like some of

\* *Ecclesiastici, sive de Nat. et Administrat. Ecclesiæ, &c. Lib. II. Cap. 2, 3, 4.*

† *Fr. Junii Animadversiones in Bellarm. contro. v. Lib. I. cap. 5, 6, 7.* No intelligent reader will fail to observe how almost universally reformers, synods, confessions, and learned divines of every name interpret *Jerome* precisely as I have done.

our zealous Episcopalians, warmly contended that the power of ordination was confined to diocesan bishops, he declares, " This *Sorbonne* doctor objects, that our ministers are only *presbyters*, and not *bishops*; and therefore could not *ordain* other ministers, since only bishops have a right to ordain. That this opinion is *false*, I shall immediately show. It is evident, from the word of God, that *bishop* and *presbyter* are the same. This appears from *Titus* 1. 5, from *Acts* xx. and from *Philip.* 1. 1. But the *doctor* will reply, that the names are indeed used interchangeably in the passages above stated; but that the offices themselves are carefully distinguished in scripture. But, I answer, when the *presbyters* are called *bishops*, the apostle is, in such places, treating not of the names and titles only, but of the office and function itself. For when he exhorts the presbyters of *Ephesus* to the right exercise of their office, he adds this reason, that the Holy Ghost had constituted them *bishops*; and, therefore, he says, not that they were only *called* so; but that they were, in very deed, constituted such bishops. So that the answer touching the confusion of names is quite overthrown.—But the *Sorbonne* doctor tells us that *Paul* enjoins *Timothy* to lay hands suddenly on no man, and, therefore, none but *Timothy* had the right of ordination. But this conclusion is utterly without foundation; for *Timothy* is also enjoined to reject fables, and to give attendance to reading, exhortation, and doctrine, &c. Did *Timothy*, therefore, arrogate all these things to himself alone? Did they not belong to *presbyters*, who, by *Paul's* testimony, laboured in the word and doctrine? *Timothy's* episcopacy at *Ephesus* cannot be made good by any testimony of Scripture." Again—" If we allow to *presbyters* the right to preach the gospel, to administer baptism, and to celebrate the Lord's supper, upon what imaginable ground can we deny them the right to *ordain*? Therefore such as exclude *presbyters* from the right to ordain, show themselves to be grossly ignorant both of the nature of ordination, and of the pastoral office." And in support of all this reasoning, and much more, which I am compelled to omit, he quotes the famous testimony of *Jerome*, and pronounces it to be conclusive. He quotes also *Irenæus*, *Ambrose*, and *Augustine*, as giving testimony which coincides with that of *Jerome*; and adds, " I cite these, because the

“*papists* esteem the authority of the fathers, more than that of plain declarations of scripture.”\*

But, in addition to all this, there is testimony of a different kind. It not only appears, from the public *confessions*, and individual declarations, which have been quoted, that the apostolical institution of ministerial parity was believed by the *Lutheran* as well as the *Reformed* churches; but it is evident that they were considered by *others* as having avowed their belief in that doctrine.

The famous cardinal *Bellarmino* certainly understood the *protestants* of his day generally to hold the equality of bishops and presbyters by divine right. “If,” saith he, “episcopacy be a sacrament distinct from the presbyterate, it will be easy to prove that a bishop is, both in order and jurisdiction, greater than a presbyter, by divine right; which NOW, ALL THE HERETICS (the *protestants*) DENY.”† *De Sacramento Ordinis*, Cap. 5. And in his work, *De Clericis*, he makes a similar declaration in terms equally express. For having asserted that a bishop is superior to a presbyter, by divine right, both with respect to order and jurisdiction, he ascribes the contrary doctrine to *Aerius*, to *Wickliffe*, to the *Lutherans*, and the *Calvinists*. Cap. 14.

*Crakenthorp*, a learned divine of the church of *England*, contemporary with *Bellarmino*, speaking of *Luther*, and the other reformers on the continent of *Europe*, expresses himself in the following terms. “They have not, I know, *bishops*, distinct from *presbyters*, and superior to them; but at the same time, they do not teach, as *Aerius* did, that ministerial imparity is contrary to the word of God. They do not condemn it. They hold that, by the word of God, and divine right, either parity, or imparity

\* *Oper. Theol.* Tom. I. Tract. *De Legitima Vocatione Pastorum Ecclesæ.* p. 65—67.

† *Bellarmino* was contemporary with archbishop *Whitgift*. It seems that, at that time, the cardinal knew of no *protestants* who held to the divine right of prelacy. It is evident, therefore, that this doctrine was then either wholly unknown in *England*, or maintained by so few, that they were not considered as worthy of being recognized as an exception.

“is *lawful*, and that every church has authority or power to admit either the one or the other as it thinks best.”\*

On these documents I shall not trouble you with many remarks. They speak a language so uniform, decided, and conclusive, that it can neither be mistaken nor resisted. And they establish, beyond the possibility of dispute, that all the leading reformers were firm believers in the primitive parity of ministers. That this was the opinion of *Luther*, *Melancthon*,† and all the principal divines of their communion, has been abundantly proved. That *Calvin* was uniformly of the same opinion, will be demonstrated in the next letter. That the *Saxon*, *Helvetic*, *French*, *Belgic*, and *Bohemian* Confessions, all declare in favour of this doctrine, as received and practised in the apostolic age, you have seen with your own eyes. And, finally, that *Cranmer* and his associates, who commenced the reformation in *England*, did also, at least at *one period*, concur in the same acknowledgment, has been placed beyond all reasonable doubt.

After viewing this body of testimony, what must we think of Mr. *How*'s repeated declarations, that “the reformers, *universally*” “admitted the apostolic claims of the episcopal constitution ;” that “*Luther* and *Melancthon* acknowledged the obligation of episcopacy ; excusing their departure from it on the ground of *necessity* ;” that “episcopacy was *never* ranked, by the reformers,

\* *Defensio Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*. Cap. 42. Sect. 6.

† It has been said that *Melancthon*, on a certain occasion, expressed a willingness to submit to the power of prelates, provided they would become patrons of the reformation. This is true. It is also true, that the same pious and amiable, but too accommodating, *Melancthon*, when he subscribed the famous *Smalkald Articles*, annexed to his subscription a declaration, (which is still to be seen,) that he was willing to allow the *pope* a superiority over all other bishops, for the sake of the peace of the church ; provided he would aid in reforming the church. And it is as true as either, that by these concessions, *Melancthon* gave great offence to the protestants of his own communion, and complains in one of his letters, of the resentment which they manifested against him on this account. See *Melancthon's epistles*, near the beginning of the volume. Having mislaid the notes which I made, at the time of perusing the passage, I am not able, at present, to make a more particular reference.



“among the corruptions, or innovations of the papacy;” that “they *all* recognized it as an institution primitive and apostolic; “acknowledging without reserve, their obligation to conform it?” And what must we think of Dr. *Bowden*, (from whom better information and more caution might have been expected,) when he fully concurs with Dr. *Hobart* and Mr. *How*, in this language of bold and unqualified assertion? How gentlemen who have any accurate knowledge of the rise and progress of the reformation; or who have attended to the history and the contents of public confessions, could write thus, is, indeed, unaccountable! I am lost in astonishment when I think of the fact!

It only remains that we notice, for a moment, the assertion of Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*, that in the Lutheran churches of *Sweden* and *Denmark*, prelacy, both in *fact* and *name*, is received. If these gentlemen mean, that there are ministers in *Sweden* and *Denmark*, who bear the titles of *bishop* and *archbishop*, their assertion is undoubtedly correct; and this is no more than I explicitly stated in my former letters. But if they mean, that the *Swedish* and *Danish* churches believe in the divine right of prelacy; that they consider episcopal ordination as necessary to constitute the Christian ministry; or that they do, *in fact*, always insist upon such ordination—they are unquestionably in a gross error; and have given their readers a most delusive view of the subject.

With respect to *Sweden*, it is well known, that those who planted the reformation, and ordained the first protestant ministers in that country, were mere presbyters. And although, from the influence of *habit*, they chose to retain the names and some of the functions of *bishops* and *archbishops*; yet it is equally certain, that the first persons who bore these titles, were set apart to their office by presbyters; and, of course, received themselves, and were enabled to communicate to others, no other than Presbyterian ordination. As to the point of light in which this subject is regarded by the church of *Sweden*, I am happy in being able to produce the testimony of the Rev. Dr. *Collin*, pastor of the *Swedish* church in *Philadelphia*, a gentleman whose acquaintance with the ecclesiastical system of his native country cannot be doubted; and whose character is a sufficient guarantee for the accuracy of his statements. He assures me, in a letter, written at my request, that all the *Swedish* divines, and particularly those who themselves

enjoy the episcopal dignity, consider episcopacy merely as a *human regulation*; that this is the doctrine of all their standard books; that accordingly, in the absence of those who are styled *bishops*, ordinations are performed by ordinary clergymen; and that even *bishops* and *archbishops*, may be set apart to their office by presbyters. In support of these facts, Dr. Collin produces the most decisive testimony from *Swedish* writers of the highest authority; and declares, that there is but one opinion among them on the subject. He adds, "The *Danes* agree with us in this matter. "*Vandalin*, Primarius Professor of Theology in *Copenhagen*, in "a much esteemed work published in the year 1727, has the following passage, p. 354. *An jure divino Episcopi a Presbyteris distincti sunt? Negatur, contra Pontificios et quosdam Anglos.*" i. e. "Are bishops and presbyters distinct orders by divine right? We deny it; in opposition to the *papists*, and to certain persons of the church of *England*." He then goes on to establish his opinion by reference to a number of passages of scripture, which are precisely those which Presbyterians usually quote.

The result of all the testimony exhibited in the present Letter, is this. That the *Waldenses*, the *Bohemian Brethren*, and all the great individual witnesses for the truth, prior to the time of *Luther*, were, almost without exception, decidedly anti-prelatical in their sentiments. That at the period of the reformation, the Presbyterian form of church government was established in all the reformed churches in *Germany*, *Scotland*, *France*, *Geneva*, and *Holland*; and its establishment in all these countries, accompanied with public and solemn declarations that they considered this as having been the apostolic and primitive form. And, that, although in the *Lutheran* churches of *Germany*, *Sweden*, *Denmark*, and other parts of *Europe*, some ministers were invested with pre-eminent powers, under different titles; yet that they all, with one voice, declared, that in the apostolic church, ministerial parity prevailed; and acknowledged, that the order of Bishops was brought in by *human authority*, and was a regulation of *expediency* alone. Such was the doctrine maintained by those churches, at that interesting period; and the same doctrine has been maintained by them uniformly to the present hour. It follows, then, agreeably to my declaration in a former letter, that the church of *England* stands

absolutely ALONE, in the whole protestant world, in asserting the divine institution of prelacy (if indeed, she, as a church, *does* assert it, which many of her own most respectable sons have denied); that every other protestant church on earth has formally disclaimed this doctrine, and pronounced the distinction between bishops and Presbyters to be a mere *human invention*; and, consequently, that the doctrine of the *jure divino* prelatists, is so far from being the *general* doctrine of the reformed churches, that it *never has been*, and is not *now*, received, by more than a very small portion—a mere handful of the Protestant world.

I repeat once more—the Bible is the statute book of the church of Christ; and by this book alone, must the question before us be finally decided. But, so far as human opinion, fortified by all the considerations of talents, learning and piety, is of any value, the doctrine of Presbyterian parity stands on the most elevated and triumphant ground.

## LETTER VII.

## THE TESTIMONY OF CALVIN.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IT has fallen to the lot of few individuals to be more mistaken and misrepresented than the venerable *Calvin*. His great talents, his profound learning, his fervent piety, his stupendous labours, his astonishing self-denial, and his sublime disinterestedness, have all been insufficient to protect him from the grossest abuse. His personal character, his theological opinions, and the form of ecclesiastical government which he preferred, have each, in turn, been the objects of accusation and slander. Had these unfair statements been either always the same, or consistent with themselves, it would not have been wonderful to find them making some impression on persons who had no access to sources of correct information. But when scarcely any two of these statements can be reconciled with each other; and when the most of them are expressly contradicted by authentic documents, it is truly a matter of wonder that they should be favourably received by any who have the least claim to the character of learning or impartiality. This wonder, however, exists. We can hardly open a controversial work from the pen of any of our episcopal brethren, without finding more or less obloquy directed against the illustrious Reformer of *Geneva*.

Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* have indulged themselves in this obloquy in a manner, and to an extent, which appears to me to demand animadversion. And as they lay so much stress on the supposed concessions of *Calvin* in favour of episcopacy; and, at

the same time, appear to enter with such hearty good will into every attempt, by whomsoever made, to load his character with reproach, I have resolved to devote the whole of the present letter to a view of the writings, the opinions, and the general character of that celebrated man.

Had these gentlemen been contented with exhibiting *Calvin*, as a man of a "fierce," "turbulent," and "intolerant spirit;" had they spoken only of his "characteristic violence," of his "playing the tyrant," and of his malignant disposition to crush all who opposed him; to such charges I should have thought it unnecessary to reply. To refute them, completely and triumphantly, as applicable in any peculiar or pre-eminent degree to that apostolic man, nothing more is requisite than a tolerable acquaintance with the history of his life and time. When so many of the greatest and best prelates that ever adorned the church of *England*; men *really* learned, and breathing in an extraordinary degree the spirit of the Gospel, have delighted to dwell on the praises of *Calvin*; when they have almost exhausted every epithet of respect in eulogizing his talents, his learning, his piety, his judgment, and the usefulness of his labours;—his memory surely needs no defence against the attacks of Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*. But when these gentlemen bring forward allegations and extracts which are calculated to mislead even their intelligent readers, and to set the *declarations* and the *practice* of the pious reformer at variance; I deem it my duty to make a few remarks, and to state a few facts, in vindication of what I consider as the cause of primitive truth and order.

Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* represent *Presbyterianism* as having originated with *Calvin*. Now it happens that *Presbyterianism*, (to say nothing of its apostolic origin,) was introduced into *Geneva*, before *Calvin* ever saw that city, when he was about nineteen years of age, and while he was yet in the communion of the church of *Rome*. The following quotation from Dr. *Heylin*, a high-toned Episcopalian, and a favourite authority of Dr. *Bowden*, will be considered by him as decisive. "In this condition it (*Geneva*) continued till the year 1528, when those of *Berne*, after a public disputation held, had made an alteration in religion, defacing images, and innovating all things in the church on the *Zuinglian* principles. *Viretus* and *Farellus*, two men exceeding studious

“ of the Reformation, had gained some footing in *Geneva*, about  
 “ that time, and laboured with the bishop to admit of such altera-  
 “ tions, as had been newly made in *Berne*. But when they saw no  
 “ hopes of prevailing with him, they practised on the lower part  
 “ of the people, with whom they had gotten most esteem, and  
 “ travelled so effectually with them in it, that the bishop and his  
 “ clergy, in a popular tumult, are expelled the town, never to be  
 “ restored to their former power. After which they proceeded to  
 “ reform the church, defacing images, and following in all points  
 “ the example of *Berne*, as by *Viretus* and *Farellus* they had been  
 “ instructed; whose doings in the same, were afterwards counte-  
 “ nanced and approved by *Calvin*, as himself confesseth.”\*

The declaration of *Calvin* to which *Heylin* refers, is probably that which he makes in his famous letter to Cardinal *Sadolet*. In the beginning of that letter, he expressly informs the Cardinal, that “ the religious system of *Geneva* had been instituted, and its ecclesiastical government reformed, before he was called thither. But “ that what had been done by *Farel* and *Viret*, he heartily approved, and strove, by all the means in his power, to *preserve* “ and *establish*.

*Beza* also informs us, and after him, *Melchior Adam*, and others, that in the year 1536, when *Calvin* stopped at *Geneva*, on his way to *Basil*, without having the remotest thought of settling at the former place, *Farel* and *Viret*, then pastors of *Geneva*, earnestly importuned him to remain in that city, and to become their associate in the ministry; that he still, however, declined; that it was not until *Farel* ventured in the name of the Omnipotent God, to denounce a curse against him, if he should persist in refusing, that he consented to remain at *Geneva*; and that he at length submitted himself to the will of the PRESBYTERY, and of the magistrates, by whose suffrages, the consent of the people being obtained, he was elected and set apart as a pastor, and also as a public teacher of divinity, in the month of August, 1536.† From this statement one fact is indubitable, viz. that there was a *presbytery* in *Geneva* before *Calvin* went thither. Another fact is equally clear, viz. that the settlement of a minister was considered as a proper

\* *Heylin's Hist. of Presbyter.* p. 4—9.

† See *Beza's Life of Calvin*; and *Melchior Adam's* do. p. 68.



act of the presbytery. Nor will it in the least degree serve the cause of my opponents to contend that the ecclesiastical system of *Geneva* was, *afterwards*, new modelled and improved by *Calvin*. Be it so. Still it is certain that the leading principles of Presbyterian polity, viz. the doctrine of *ministerial parity*, and the government of the church by *presbyteries*, were received and in use, before the public ministry of *Calvin* commenced, or any of his writings had appeared.

Dr. *Henry More*, in his *Divine Dialogues*, p. 82. speaking of the reformation of *Geneva*, says,—“As for *Calvin*, the charge of rebellion upon him is, that he expelled the bishop of *Geneva*, who was the chief magistrate of that city, and changed the government, and so carried on the reformation. But this is a mere calumny against *Calvin*, and without all ground; for not so much as that is true, that *Calvin* was one of the first planters of the reformation at *Geneva*; and much less that he, or any other reformers expelled the bishop out of that city. It was *Farel*, *Viret*, and *Froment*, that, by their preaching, converted *Geneva*, in the bishop’s absence, who fled away eight months before, being hated by the citizens for the rape of a virgin, and many adulteries with their wives.”

That Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* should be unacquainted with all this, is truly surprising! I know, indeed, that it is expecting too much to suppose that these gentlemen will take the trouble to investigate more than one side of this controversy. But when their own favourite writers might have informed them of all the facts above stated, it is rather singular that they should have yet to learn them.

Another allegation of these gentlemen is, that *Calvin*, in the early part of his public life, thought very favourably of diocesan episcopacy, and even believed and acknowledged its apostolic origin. That *afterwards*, when he had undertaken to erect a church on a different model, and especially when he had the prospect of attaining great distinction in the Presbyterian establishment of *Geneva*, he began to alter his views and his language; but that, even after he had fairly embarked in support of Presbyterian principles, he rather defended himself by the plea of necessity than divine authority. Nay, Mr. *How* declares, that *Calvin*, in rearing the church of *Geneva*, acknowledged that he was departing from the

primitive discipline ; that he considered prelacy as an apostolic institution ; and that he expressed a *decided preference* in favour of this form of government : But adds, “ I deny not that *Calvin* “ and *Beza* held, *afterwards*, a language more *presbyterial*. At “ length, indeed, schism, and the pride of sect, either changed their “ sentiments, or perverted their principles. In fact, the conduct of “ these men, in relation to the ministry of the christian church, “ presents one of the most melancholy examples of the prevalence “ of pride over virtue, and of the unhappy influence of schism, in “ blinding and infatuating the mind, that the history of human “ frailty has ever recorded.” *Letters*, p. 62—75. Dr. *Bowden*, is equally positive in asserting, that *Calvin* believed and acknowledged the apostolic origin of episcopacy ; and that he justified himself in departing from it only on the ground of *necessity*. In fact, by subscribing and referring to Dr. *Hobart’s* statement of the case, in his *Apology for Apostolic Order*, p. 91—117, the reverend professor has gone the whole length of Mr. *How*.

When I read assertions of this kind, I cannot help recollecting, in a well known and popular fictitious history, a certain chapter which bears the following title—“ An humble attempt to prove “ that an author will write the better for having some knowledge “ of the subject on which he writes.” If I had the least apprehension that these gentlemen had ever perused the works of *Calvin*, or really knew what he has left on record upon this subject, such a representation, so frequently and confidently made, would excite feelings more unfavourable than those of astonishment. But as I have no such apprehension, and feel perfectly persuaded that the perusal of a few detached passages, forms the sum total of their acquaintance with *Calvin’s* writings, I cannot find in my heart to apply a severe epithet to a misrepresentation so total concerning the history of his language and opinions.

The truth is that the *earliest* of *Calvin’s* writings contain some of the strongest declarations in favour of Presbyterian principles that are to be found in all his works. His *Institutions*, his first theological work, were published in 1536, before he had ever seen *Geneva* ; before he ever thought of settling there ; and when he was so far from aspiring to pre-eminence in any Presbyterian establishment, that he does not appear to have had in view the pastoral office in *any* church. Now it is certain that this work is as

decisive on the subject of presbytery as any that ever came from his pen. At that period, when his mind appears to have been as dispassionate and impartial as ever that of a reformer was; when he had no visible temptation to deviate from the apostolic model; and when both habit and prejudice were leagued against presbytery, and in favour of episcopacy; at that period, and in that work, he decidedly declared himself an advocate of Presbyterian government, as the truly apostolic and primitive plan. But the following quotations from it will place this fact in a stronger light, than any reasonings or statements of mine.

Book iv. chap. iii. In this chapter he expressly declares it to be his intention to exhibit “that order by which it was the Lord’s will to have his church governed.”—In doing this, he unequivocally delivers it as his opinion, that the apostolic model of church government was Presbyterian;—that both the office and ordination of bishop and presbyter were the same; that the scriptural bishop was the pastor of a single church; that there were sometimes more bishops than one in the primitive churches, and all on a perfect equality; and that there were *ruling elders* and *deacons* in those churches, exactly on the Presbyterian plan.

The following extracts, out of many that might be made, are decisive. “Whereas I have indiscriminately called those who govern the churches, *bishops, presbyters, and pastors*, I have done so according to the usage of scripture, which indifferently employs these terms to designate the same officer; for whoever executes the office of ministers of the gospel, to them the scriptures give the title of *bishops*. So by *Paul*, where *Titus* is commanded to ordain elders in every city, it is immediately added, *for a bishop must be blameless, &c.* Tit. i. 5. So, in another place, (*Philip*. i. 1.) he salutes many bishops in one church. And in the *Acts* it is related that he called together the elders of *Ephesus*, whom he himself, in his discourse to them, styles *bishops*. *Acts* xx. 17. But here it is to be observed, that hitherto we have only taken notice of those offices which pertain to the ministry of the word; neither doth *Paul* make mention of any other in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the *Ephesians*, which we before cited. But in the epistle to the *Romans* (xii. 7.) and in the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, (xii. 28.) he reckons up other offices, as powers, the gift of healing, interpretation, government,

“ taking care of the poor. Of these, I omit such as were merely  
 “ temporary, because it is not worth the trouble to dwell upon  
 “ them. But there are two that are permanent, *government*,  
 “ and *the care of the poor*. Those who governed were, in my  
 “ opinion, elders chosen out of the laymen of each congregation,  
 “ who, together with the bishops, bore rule in the correction of  
 “ morals, and in the exercise of discipline. For no one can other-  
 “ wise expound that which the apostle saith, (*Rom. xii. 8.*) *He that*  
 “ *ruleth, let him do it with diligence*. Every church, therefore,  
 “ from the beginning, had its own *senate*, collected from among  
 “ the godly, grave and holy, who had that jurisdiction over the  
 “ correction of vices of which we shall speak hereafter.—And,  
 “ moreover, that this was the order of more than one age, expe-  
 “ rience itself teaches. This office of government, therefore, is  
 “ necessary for all ages.”

“ The care of the poor was committed to the *deacons*——Al-  
 “ though the word deacon has a more extensive meaning; yet  
 “ the Scripture especially calls them *deacons*, to whom the church  
 “ hath given in charge the distribution of alms, and the care of  
 “ the poor; and hath appointed them, as it were, stewards of  
 “ the common treasury of the poor—whose origin, institution, and  
 “ office are described by *Luke* in *Acts vi*. For when a murmuring  
 “ arose among the *Grecians*, because in the ministrations to the  
 “ poor, their widows were neglected, the apostles, excusing them-  
 “ selves, as not being adequate to the execution of both offices,  
 “ both the preaching of the word, and the ministering at tables,  
 “ requested the multitude to choose seven honest men to whom  
 “ they might commit that business. Behold what manner of *dea-*  
 “ *cons* the apostolic church had; and what kind of deacons it be-  
 “ comes us to have in conformity with their example!”

*Book iv. Chap. 4th.* Having treated of the order of the church  
 as “ delivered in the pure word of God, and of the ministries as  
 instituted by Christ,” he undertakes, in this chapter, to exhibit the  
 order which obtained in the “ ancient church,” that is, as he  
 explains it, the church as it existed soon *after* the apostolic age,  
 and before the rise of the papacy. Now this “ ancient church,” he  
 expressly declares, *deviated* from the pure apostolic model; but,  
 at the same time, he supposes that the deviation was not great or  
 essential. He proceeds, “ As we have declared that there are

“ three sorts of ministers commended to us in the Scriptures ; so  
 “ all the ministers that the ancient church had, it divided into three  
 “ orders. For out of the order of presbyters, part were chosen  
 “ *pastors* and *teachers*, and the rest *bore rule* in the administration  
 “ of discipline. To the *deacons* was committed the care of the  
 “ poor, and the distribution of alms. All those to whom the  
 “ office of teaching was committed, were called *Presbyters*. They,  
 “ in every city, chose one, out of their own number, to whom they,  
 “ specially, gave the title of *bishop* ; that dissensions might not  
 “ grow out of equality as is wont to be the case. Yet the bishop  
 “ was not so in honour and dignity above the rest, as to have *any*  
 “ *dominion* over *his colleagues* ; but the office which the consul  
 “ had in the senate, to propose business ; to collect opinions ; to  
 “ preside in consulting, admonishing, and exhorting ; to direct, by  
 “ his authority, the whole process of business ; and to put in exe-  
 “ cution that which was decreed by the common counsel of all,  
 “ —the same office had the *bishop* in the assembly of *presbyters*.  
 “ And even *this* the ancient writers themselves confess, was brought  
 “ in *by human consent*, on account of the necessity of the times.—  
 “ Therefore *Jerome*, in his commentary on the epistle to *Titus*,  
 “ saith—A *presbyter* was the *same* with a *bishop*. And before  
 “ there were, by the devil’s instigation, dissensions in religion, and  
 “ it was said among the people, *I am of Paul*, and *I of Cephas*,  
 “ the churches were governed by the common council of presby-  
 “ ters. Afterwards, that the seeds of dissension might be plucked  
 “ up, all the care was devolved on one person.—As, therefore, the  
 “ presbyters know that *by the custom of the church*, they are sub-  
 “ ject to him who presides among them ; so let the bishops know,  
 “ that they are above the presbyters *rather by custom*, than by any  
 “ real appointment of Christ ; and that they ought to govern the  
 “ churches in common. And in another place, (*Epist. ad Evagr.*)  
 “ he teaches how ancient an institution this was ; for he says,  
 “ that at *Alexandria*, from *Mark*, the evangelist, down to *Hera-*  
 “ *clas* and *Dionysius*, the presbyters always placed one, chosen  
 “ out of their own number, in a higher station, and called him  
 “ bishop. Every city, then, had a college of presbyters, who were  
 “ pastors and teachers, and who all executed among the people  
 “ the offices of instructing, exhorting, and exercising discipline,  
 “ which *Paul* enjoins on bishops, *Titus* i. 9. And every one of

“ these colleges, (as I said before,) was under the presidency of  
 “ one bishop, who was only so *far* above the rest in dignity, as to  
 “ be himself subject to the assembly of his brethren.”

In chapter 11th, sect. 6, of the same book, speaking of the exercise of discipline in particular churches, he says—“ But such  
 “ authority was not in the power of one man, to do every thing  
 “ according to his own will; but in the assembly of the elders,  
 “ which was the same thing in the church that a senate is in a  
 “ city. The common and usual manner was for the authority of  
 “ the church to be exercised by a senate of elders, of whom (as I  
 “ have before said,) there were *two sorts*, for some were ordained  
 “ to *teach*, and others only to *rule* in matters of discipline. But  
 “ by little and little this institution degenerated from its original  
 “ character; so that even in the time of *Ambrose*, the clergy alone  
 “ had cognizance of ecclesiastical causes, of which he complains in  
 “ these words—The ancient synagogue,” says he, “ and after-  
 “ wards the church, had elders, without whose counsel nothing was  
 “ done.”—We see how much the holy man was displeased, that  
 “ there should be a falling off in any respect, when as yet things  
 “ continued, to say the least, in a tolerable condition.—What  
 “ would he have said if he had seen the mis-shapen ruins which  
 “ now appear, and which exhibit scarcely any vestige of the an-  
 “ cient edifice? What lamentation would he have expressed?  
 “ For, first, against law and right, the bishop hath *usurped to*  
 “ *himself* that authority which was vested in the church. For it is  
 “ all one as if the consul had expelled the senate, and assumed  
 “ the empire to himself alone. For surely, though he is in honour  
 “ superior to the rest, yet there is more authority in the college  
 “ than in one man. It was, therefore, a *very wicked deed*, that one  
 “ man, having gotten into his own hands the power which was  
 “ before common to the whole college, paved the way to tyranni-  
 “ cal domination, snatched from the church her own right, and  
 “ abolished the presbytery, which, by the Spirit of Christ had  
 “ been ordained.”

*Book iv. Chapter v. Sect. 15.* “ Now let the *deacons* come  
 “ forth, and that holy distribution which they have of the church’s  
 “ goods; although they by no means, at present, create their  
 “ deacons for that purpose. For they (the papists) enjoin upon  
 “ them nothing else but to minister at the altar, to read or sing the



“ Gospels, and to perform I know not what trifles. Nothing of the  
 “ *alms*, nothing of the care of the *poor*, nothing of the *whole func-*  
 “ *tion* which, in *former times*, they executed. I speak of the very  
 “ institution ; for if we have a respect to what they do, it is not in  
 “ itself an office, but only a step toward the priesthood. Therefore  
 “ *they mock the church with this lying deaconry*. Truly therein  
 “ they have nothing like, either the institution of the apostles, or  
 “ ancient usage.”

Such was the language of *Calvin* in 1536, when he was just entering on his great career. And this was his uniform language to the end of his life. I cannot find a single passage in all his writings in which he speaks with greater severity of diocesan episcopacy, than in some of the preceding extracts. On their import it is unnecessary to enlarge. They speak for themselves.

The following extracts from *Calvin's* commentary, written at different periods of his life, and under different circumstances, will show that his opinion on the subject in dispute was uniformly the same.

In his commentary on *Philip. i. 1.* written in the year 1548, we find the following passage. “ He calls the *pastors, bishops*, for the sake of honour. Moreover we infer from this place that “ the name of *bishop* is common to *all ministers of the word*, since “ the apostle assigns a *plurality of bishops* to a single church. “ The names *bishop* and *pastor* are, therefore, synonymous. “ And this passage is one of those which *Jerome* cites to prove the “ same thing, in his epistle to *Evagrius*, and in his exposition of “ the epistle to *Titus*. Afterwards it became customary that he who “ presided in the bench of presbyters of a particular church, should “ alone be called bishop. This, however, arose from *human cus-*  
 “ *tom*, and is *by no means supported by scripture*.—I confess, in-  
 “ deed, that such are the tempers and habits of men that order  
 “ cannot be maintained among ministers of the word, unless one  
 “ preside. But I speak of particular bodies ; not of whole pro-  
 “ vinces ; and much less of the whole world. And although it is  
 “ not proper to dispute about words ; yet it is better in speaking,  
 “ to follow the Holy Spirit, the author of language, than to change  
 “ the forms of expression established by him for the worse.—For  
 “ out of the corrupted signification of a word, this evil arose, that

“ thence, as if all the presbyters were not *colleagues*, and called to  
 “ the same function, one, under the pretext of a new title, arro-  
 “ gated to himself a dominion over others.”

In his exposition of *Titus* i. 5. written in 1549, he thus writes.  
 “ *Presbyters* or *elders*, it is well known, are not so denominated  
 “ on account of their *age*, since *young* men are sometimes chosen  
 “ to this office, as, for instance, *Timothy* ; but it has always been  
 “ customary, in all languages, to apply this title, as a term of ho-  
 “ nour, to all rulers. And as we gather, from the first epistle to  
 “ *Timothy*, that there were *two kinds* of elders, so here the con-  
 “ text shows that no other than *teaching elders* are to be under-  
 “ stood ; that is, those who were ordained to *teach* ; because the  
 “ same persons are immediately afterwards called *bishops*.—It  
 “ may be objected, that too much power seems to be given to *Titus*,  
 “ when the apostle commands him to appoint ministers over all  
 “ the churches. This, it may be said, is little less than kingly  
 “ power ; for, on this plan, the right of choice is taken away from  
 “ the particular churches, and the right of judging in the case from  
 “ the college of pastors ; and this would be to profane the whole  
 “ of the sacred discipline of the church. But the answer is easy.  
 “ Every thing was *not entrusted* to the will of *Titus* as an *indivi-*  
 “ *dual*, nor was he allowed to impose such bishops on the churches  
 “ as he pleased ; but he was commanded to *preside* in the elec-  
 “ tions, as a *moderator*, as it is necessary for some one to do. This  
 “ is a mode of speaking exceedingly common. Thus a consul, or  
 “ regent, or dictator is said to create consuls, because he convenes  
 “ assemblies for the purpose of making choice of them. So also  
 “ *Luke* uses the same mode of speaking concerning *Paul* and  
 “ *Barnabas*, in the *Acts of the Apostles* ; not that they alone,  
 “ authoritatively appointed pastors over the churches, without  
 “ their being tried or approved ; but they *ordained* suitable men,  
 “ who had been elected, or chosen by the people. We learn also,  
 “ from this place, that there was not, then, *such* an equality among  
 “ the ministers of the church, as was inconsistent with some one  
 “ presiding in authority and council.\* This, however, is nothing

\* The original of this sentence is as follows—*Discimus quidem ex hoc loco, non eam fuisse tunc equalitatem inter ecclesiæ ministros quin unus aliquis autoritate et consilio præesset.* Dr. Bowden and Mr. How both

“like the *tyrannical and unscriptural prelacy* which reigns in the papacy. The plan of the apostles was extremely different.”

On the 7th verse of the same chapter, he thus expresses himself—“Moreover this place abundantly teaches us that there is no difference between *presbyters* and *bishops*; because the apostle now calls promiscuously by the second of these names, those whom he had before called *presbyters*, and indeed the argument which follows, employs both names indifferently in the same sense; which *Jerome* hath observed, as well in his commentary on this passage, as in his epistle to *Evagrius*. And hence we may see how much more has been yielded to the opinions of men than was decent: because the style of the Holy Spirit being abrogated, a custom introduced by the will of man, prevailed.—I do not, indeed, disapprove of the opinion, that, soon after the commencement of the church, every college of bishops had some one to act as *moderator*. But that a name of office which God had given *in common to all*, should be transferred to an *individual alone*, the rest being *robbed of it*, was both *injurious and absurd*. Wherefore so to pervert the language of the Holy Spirit, as that the same expressions should convey a meaning to us *different from that which he intended*, partakes too much of *profane audacity*.”

In his commentary on 1 *Peter* v. 1. written in 1551, and dedicated to *Edward VI.* of *England*, the following passage occurs. “*Presbyters*. By this title he designates *Pastors*, and whoever were appointed to the government of the church. And since *Peter* calls himself a presbyter, like the rest, it is hence apparent that this name was common; which, indeed, from many other

quote this sentence, both undertake to translate it for the benefit of their readers, and both concur in giving the following translation—“Hence we learn that there was not *any equality* among the ministers of the church, but that one was placed over the rest in authority and council.” This is one of the principal quotations from *Calvin* on which they found the assertion that he believed in the apostolical origin of episcopacy! Instead of saying what they ascribe to it, it asserts directly the contrary. It declares that there was an *official equality* among the ministers of the primitive church; but, at the same time, an equality by no means inconsistent with one being *Moderator*. This is precisely the Presbyterian doctrine and practice.

“ passages appears still more clearly. Moreover, by this title he  
 “ claimed to himself authority ; as if he had said, that he admo-  
 “ nished pastors in his own right, because he was *one of their num-*  
 “ *ber* ; for among *colleagues* there ought to be this mutual privilege.  
 “ Whereas if he had enjoyed any pre-eminence of authority among  
 “ them, he might have urged that, and it would have been more  
 “ pertinent to the occasion : But although he was an apostle, yet  
 “ he knew that this gave him no authority over his colleagues ; but  
 “ that he was rather joined with the rest in a social office.”

Calvin's exposition of the first epistle to *Timothy* was written in the year 1556, and dedicated to the Duke of *Somerset*, Lord Protector of *England*. In his remarks on the fifth chapter and seventeenth verse, of that epistle, he speaks thus : “ From this passage  
 “ we may gather that there were then *two kinds* of *presbyters*,  
 “ because they were *not all* ordained to the work of *teaching*. For  
 “ the words plainly mean, that some *ruled well*, to whom *no part*  
 “ of the public *instruction* was committed. And verily there were  
 “ chosen from among the people, grave and approved men, who,  
 “ in common council, and joint authority with the pastors, adminis-  
 “ tered the discipline of the church, and acted the part of censors  
 “ for the correction of morals.—This practice *Ambrose* complains  
 “ had *fallen into disuse*, through the *indolence*, or rather the *pride*  
 “ of the teaching elders, while they wished to be alone distin-  
 “ guished.”

I will only add, that, in his commentary on *Acts* xx. 28, written in 1560, a short time before his death, he expresses himself thus :  
 “ Concerning the word *Bishop*, it is observable, that *Paul* gives  
 “ this title to all the *presbyters* of *Ephesus* : from which we may  
 “ infer, that according to scripture, *presbyters* differed, *in no re-*  
 “ *spect*, from *bishops* : but that it arose from *corruption*, and a  
 “ *departure from primitive purity*, that those who held the first  
 “ seats in particular cities, began to be called *bishops*. I say that  
 “ it arose from *corruption*, not that it is an evil for some one, in  
 “ each college of pastors, to be distinguished above the rest ; but  
 “ because it is *intolerable presumption*, that men, in *perverting*  
 “ the *titles* of scripture to their own humour, do not hesitate to  
 “ alter the meaning of the Holy Spirit.”

But, in spite of all these repeated and positive declarations of Calvin, Dr. Bowden and Mr. How still insist, that he acknow-

ledged the apostolical institution of prelacy, and offered the plea of *necessity* for adopting the Presbyterian government in *Geneva*. To prove this, they produce two extracts from his writings, which have really nothing to do with the subject; but which, ever since the time of the ignorant or disingenuous *Durell*, have been triumphantly quoted by high churchmen, for a similar purpose.

The first of these extracts is from *Calvin's* famous letter to Cardinal *Sadolet*, and is in the following words. "We do not deny that we want a *discipline* such as the ancient church (*Vetus Ecclesia*) had. But with what justice can we be accused of subverting discipline, by those very men (the papists) who alone have entirely destroyed it; and who, when we endeavoured to restore it, have hitherto prevented us? But with respect to *doctrine*, we are willing to be compared with the ancient church."\*

How far this extract really goes towards proving the point intended to be established by it, will appear from the following analysis of the letter. *Calvin*, in his reply to *Sadolet*, pursues the method which the cardinal had adopted in arranging his charges against the Church of *Geneva*. He firmly defends his own ministry, which we all know was *Presbyterian*, and which his antagonist had represented as invalid. He warmly refutes the charge of *ambition*, and *pecuniary* influence, alleged against the reforming ministers. After defining what he means by a church; and after repelling the charge, that he had *left* the church, by showing that he had only *reformed* it; he invites *Sadolet* to compare their respective churches with the *ancient* church. The cardinal could not, consistently with popish pretensions, submit to be tried by the state of the church as described in the New Testament. *Calvin*, therefore, although he considered the apostolic church as the only proper model, waives his right, for the sake of argument, and challenges the cardinal to compare with *antiquity*. "Not," says he expressly, "not with that form which the apostles appointed, which is the only model of a true church;" but even with the "*ancient church*," as it stood in the days of *Chrysostom* and *Basil*, among the Greeks; and of *Cyprian*, *Ambrose*, &c. among the Latins: which "*ancient church*" he justly asserts, differed as much from the Church of *Rome*, at the time of his writing, as did the reign of *David* from that of *Zede-*

\* *Ad Sadoletum Responsio CALVINI. Tractatus Theologici.* p. 125.

*kiah*. In order to make an impression on popish minds, *Calvin* judged it more suitable to show the defection of their church from what they themselves called the standard, than their inconsistency with apostolic order, about which they had less concern.

*Calvin* maintains in this letter, that the *sacraments* and the *doctrine* of the “ancient church,” corresponded much more nearly with the *Reformed* than with the *Popish Church*. He readily confesses that the *discipline* of the reformed, differs from that of the “ancient church.” But he alleges, at the same time, that this concession cannot avail the cardinal, whose church *differs still more* from that discipline. And he also alleges, that, amidst all the opposition and difficulties with which they had to struggle, in the restoration of strict discipline, they were still going on; that they had already approached *nearer* to the “ancient church” than their popish neighbours; and, by perseverance, were likely soon even to *surpass* that model. Now, all this reasoning would have been very preposterous, if *Calvin* had been here speaking of prelacy. For how could the church of *Geneva*, which was *Presbyterian* in its form, be *nearer*, on prelatical principles, to the “ancient church,” than that of *Rome* was, which embraced prelacy? And, above all, how could *Calvin* say that the Church of *Geneva* was still approaching *nearer* to the “ancient church” in *discipline*, and was likely to *surpass* it? Was the church of *Geneva* then growing more *prelatical*? No one ever supposed it. The truth is, by *discipline*, *Calvin* and *Sadolet* both mean the system of rules for directing the *whole christian conduct* both of ministers and people. There is nothing in this part of the argument that has the least reference to different *orders* in the ministry.

It turns out, then, that this famous extract from the letter to *Sadolet* has nothing to do with the question in dispute; that the tenor of the letter, so far as it bears on prelacy, is directly opposed to it; that the *Vetus Ecclesia*, the “ancient church,” intended by *Calvin*, is not, as he himself expressly declares, the church as it was left by the apostles, but as it stood in the *third* and *fourth* centuries; that the *discipline* of which he speaks, has no reference to orders in the Christian ministry; and, of course, that the boasted passage in question could never have been quoted as affording the least hint in favour of prelacy, excepting by those who had never read the whole letter, or grossly perverted its evident mean-



ing. With the latter, I do not charge Dr. *Bowden* or Mr. *How*. I take for granted they have never read a sentence of the letter, excepting the detached passage under consideration. They have been led astray by others, probably as little acquainted with it as themselves.

The other passage which Mr. *How* quotes as positive proof that *Calvin* believed in the divine institution of prelacy, is taken from his Tract *De Necessitate Reformandæ Ecclesiæ*, as follows. "If they (the Papists) would exhibit to us an hierarchy, in which the bishops should be so distinguished, as not to refuse subjection to Christ; then I will confess that they are worthy of all anathemas, if any such there be, who would not reverence it, and submit themselves to it with the utmost obedience."\*

This passage, when impartially examined, will be found as little to the purpose as the former. It is only saying, that *Calvin* stood ready to approve of a *scriptural* and *primitive* episcopacy, whenever it should be introduced. And would not all *Presbyterians*, as well as *Calvin*, say the same thing? Nay, blessed be God! we can go further. It is the happiness of our church that we HAVE SUCH AN EPISCOPACY, and we glory in having it. *Calvin* never denied that there were *bishops* in the days of the apostles. No Presbyterian ever denied it. It is for *such* an episcopacy as was established by inspired men in *Jerusalem*, *Ephesus*, *Antioch*, and *Philippi*, that we contend; and the venerable reformer of *Geneva* meant no other.

It has been said that *Calvin's* employing the word *hierarchy* (*hierarchiam*) in this passage, proves that he referred with approbation to an ecclesiastical constitution embracing *different orders* of clergy. It has been even asserted, that this word is *exclusively appropriated* to government by prelates; and that no instance can be found of its application to any other kind of ecclesiastical regimen. This is a total mistake. The word *hierarchy* simply implies *sacred* or *ecclesiastical government*. It may be applied with as much propriety to *Presbyterianism* or *Independency*, as to *diocesan episcopacy*. It has been often so applied by the best writers. But, what settles the matter is, that *Calvin* himself so applies it. In his *Institutions*, Lib. iv. Cap. 5. he speaks of "that

\* *J. Calvini Tractatus Theologici*, p. 69.

*hierarchy* or *spiritual government*," which was left in the church by the apostles, and which he expressly declares, in the same chapter to have been Presbyterian in its form. Many other instances might be produced in which this Reformer has used the same word in a similar sense. When gentlemen undertake to interpret *Calvin*, and especially to speak with so much positiveness of his meaning, they ought to have some acquaintance with his writings.

Where now, let me ask, is the proof of which my opponents speak so much, and so confidently, that *Calvin* believed in the divine institution of prelacy; that he lamented the want of it in *Geneva*; and that he justified himself by the plea of *necessity*, in establishing Presbyterian government in that Church? It is not to be found. No such proof exists. They have not produced a syllable which looks like it. Nor do I believe that they can produce a solitary scrap, from all his voluminous writings, nor any well attested declaration,\* made *at any period of his public life*, which will bear such a construction.

The truth is, *Calvin* never pretended any such necessity. On the contrary, he steadfastly represented the *Genevan* form of government and discipline, as strictly agreeable to the word of God, and as that which he felt himself bound, by obedience to Christ, to establish and defend. "Besides," says he, "that our conscience acquits us in the sight of God, the thing itself will answer for us in the sight of men. Nobody has yet appeared that could prove that we had *altered any one thing*, which God has commanded; or that we have appointed any *new thing* contrary to his word; or that we have *turned aside* from the truth, to

\* I say *well attested*, because the story which Dr. *Bowden* gravely repeats of *Calvin*, *Bullinger*, &c. having written to *Edward VI.* in 1549, "offering to make him their defender, and to have bishops in their churches, for better unity and concord," is *not* so attested. I think no impartial reader can peruse the account, as given by *Strype*, without suspecting the whole to be a fable. Let us see the letter; and we will answer to the charge. But even admitting this to be *true*, to what does it amount? Why, that *Calvin*, in an evil hour, made a concession with respect to *prelates*, similar to that which *Melancthon* had made before him, with respect to the *Pope*; and that in direct opposition to all his solemnly declared principles, and uniform practice.

“ follow any evil opinion. On the contrary, it is manifest that we  
 “ have reformed our church MERELY BY GOD’S WORD, which is  
 “ the *only rule* by which it is to be ordered and lawfully defended.  
 “ It is, indeed, an unpleasant work to alter what has been formerly  
 “ in use, were it not that the order which God has once fixed,  
 “ must be esteemed by us as sacred and inviolable ; insomuch that  
 “ if it has, for a time, been laid aside, it must of necessity, (and  
 “ whatever the consequences should prove,) be restored again.  
 “ No antiquity, no prescription of custom, may be allowed to be  
 “ an obstacle in this case, that the government of the church  
 “ which God has appointed, should not be perpetual, *since the*  
 “ *Lord himself has once fixed it.*”\*

So much for the opinion of *Calvin* on the subject of *episcopacy*. I shall now proceed to take notice of some other allegations which *Dr. Bowden* has made concerning this great man, and which are as destitute of foundation as those which have been already refuted.

Doctor *Bowden* asserts, on the authority of *Dr. Leaming*, that *Calvin* never was *ordained*; and represents that gentleman as having derived his information from *Beza*. The doctor has suffered himself to be led astray, by an ignorant or dishonest guide. *Beza* says no such thing. On the contrary, after informing us that *Calvin* had frequently preached while he was yet a youth, in the communion of the church of *Rome*, and that he did this without having received any *Popish* orders ; *Beza* proceeds to state that he was set apart (*designatus*) to the ministry by the *presbytery of Geneva*, in the month of August in the year 1536.† Besides, even if there were no record establishing the time and place of his ordination, we might fairly presume that such a solemnity had taken place, because it was the general sentiment of the reformers that ordination by the imposition of hands is both scriptural and necessary ; because this mode of constituting the ministry is well known to have been the *habit* of the times ; because *Calvin* in his *Institutions*, published only a few weeks before he went to *Geneva*, expressly enjoins ordination in this manner ; and because in the

\* *Epist. ad quendam Curatum; in Calvin. Epist. p. 386.*

† See *Beza's Life of Calvin.*

confession of the French churches, which he drew up a short time afterwards, such ordination is declared to be essential to a regular ministry. Now is it credible, that *Calvin*, when it was perfectly within his reach, would have suffered himself, under all the circumstances which have been mentioned, to be without that seal of office, which habit and public opinion imperiously demanded, and which both before and after, he himself represented as so highly important? It is not credible. We should be bound, on every principle of probability, to take for granted that he was regularly ordained, even if no hint had ever been given on the subject by a single writer.

But we have other evidence that *Calvin* was regularly ordained. *Junius*, the learned professor of divinity in the University of *Leyden*, before mentioned, who was a contemporary with *Calvin*, explicitly states the fact. *Bellarmino* had asserted that, before *Calvin*, *presbyters* had not undertaken to ordain. *Junius* contradicts him; asserts that the reformers who preceded *Calvin*, held and practised Presbyterian ordination; and declares that by some of these, "his predecessors, *Calvin* was himself ordained."\* And Cardinal *Bellarmino*, speaking of the validity of ordinations as performed in the protestant churches, says, "Neither *Luther*, nor *Zuingle*, nor *Calvin* were bishops, but only *presbyters*." *Neque Lutherus, neque Zuinglius, neque Calvinus episcopi fuerunt, sed tantum presbyteri.*† Neither the learning nor the talents of this celebrated papist will be denied. He lived at the same time with *Calvin*, and must have known his history; and he had as strong temptation, as Dr. *Bowden* can have, to degrade both the personal and ecclesiastical character of that reformer; yet he explicitly concedes that he was reputed a *presbyter*.

But supposing the fact established that he never was ordained, either in the Presbyterian, the Episcopal, or any other mode. What then? It has no more to do with the argument in question than with the remotest speculation in mathematical or physical science. Has *Calvin* been the ordainer of all Presbyterian ministers since he entered the church? Did he ever undertake, alone, to ordain even a single minister? It is one of the numerous advan-

\* *Fr. Junii Animadversiones in Bellarm. Controv. v. Lib. I. Cap. 3.*  
19.

† *Bellarmin. Controv. v. Lib. Cap. 3.*

tages of Presbyterianism that it affords much greater security against spurious ordinations, than episcopacy. It vests the power of ordaining, not in a single man, but in a *presbytery*; so that a case can never occur, among us, in which a defect of ecclesiastical character in an individual, can vitiate an ordination.

But Dr. Bowden not only denies that there is any evidence that *Calvin* was ever ordained; he even goes so far as to express a very serious doubt whether the reformers ever considered him in the light of a *minister* at all. Instead of taking up your time to express my surprise at a suggestion so extraordinary, I shall content myself with presenting two or three testimonies, which will show how *Calvin* was viewed by contemporary English divines.

The celebrated martyr, *Philpot*, a very eminent divine of the Church of England, who suffered for the truth in the reign of Queen *Mary*, said to his popish judges—"Which of you is able to answer *Calvin's Institutions*, who is *minister of Geneva*? I am sure you blaspheme that *godly man*, and that *godly church*, where he is *minister*, as it is your church's condition, when you cannot answer men by learning, to oppress them, with blasphemies and false reports. For in the matter of *predestination*, he (*Calvin*) is in no other opinion than all the doctors of the church be, agreeing with the scriptures." On a subsequent examination he declared—"I allow the Church of *Geneva*, and the doctrine of the same; for it is *una, catholica, et apostolica*, and doth follow the doctrines which the apostles did preach; and the doctrine taught and preached in King *Edward's* days was also according to the same."\*

Bishop *Jewel's* opinion of *Calvin* and of *Calvinism* will appear from the following declarations. His antagonist *Harding*, a virulent papist, is continually reviling the bishop as a disciple of *Calvin*, and the English Protestants as *Calvinists*. The bishop never disavows the charge, and repeatedly defends *Calvin* in terms of high respect. "Touching Mr. *Calvin*," says he, "it is a great wrong untruly to report so reverend a father, and so worthy an ornament of the church of God. If you had ever known the order of the Church at *Geneva*, and had seen four thousand people or more receiving the holy mysteries together at one commu-

\* *Book of Martyrs*, Vol. III. *Philpot's Examinations*.



"nion, you could not, without great shame and want of modesty, thus untruly have published to the world that, by Mr. *Calvin's* doctrine, the sacraments of Christ are superfluous."\*

Bishop *Hooper*, when he was imprisoned for his adherence to the truth, in the reign of Queen *Mary*, wrote in the most friendly and affectionate manner to *Calvin*, addressing him in terms of profound respect for his *ecclesiastical*, as well as his *personal* character, and begging *his*, and his *church's* prayers.

Bishop *Hall*, though not a contemporary of *Calvin*, yet lived so near his time, as to be perfectly acquainted with the light in which he was viewed by the English reformers. Speaking of him, he says, "That the *Latin* or *Western* church, subject to the Romish tyranny (unto the very times of *Luther*) was a true church, in which a saving profession of the truth of Christ was found, our learned Dr. *Field* hath saved me the labour to prove, by the suffrages of our *best* and *most renowned* DIVINES, among whom he cites *Calvin*, *Bucer*, *Melancthon*, *Beza*, &c." Here Bishop *Hall* not only acknowledges the illustrious reformer of *Geneva*, as one of the *best* and *most renowned* of *divines*; but even places him *at the head* of the list!

Dr. *Bowden* asserts, that soon after the reformation commenced in *England*, *Calvin* made an *officious* offer of his services, to aid the cause in that country; that the English reformers, knowing his "arrogant" and "tyrannical" spirit, "civilly *rejected* his offer;" and that this "displeased him to such a degree, that although he had before spoken handsome things of the church of *England*, yet from that time he began to say harsh things of her." Here again, I am compelled to say, Dr. *Bowden* shows himself to be entirely unacquainted with facts; and with facts too, which he might have learned from his own historians.

The truth is, the services of *Calvin* in the cause of the reformation, instead of being obtrusively and officiously *offered* by him, were expressly and warmly *solicited* by Archbishop *Croumer*. This is attested so decidedly by the most impartial historians, that the only wonder is, how a gentleman of Dr. *Bowden's* character, could stoop to be the retailer of so stale a calumny as the opposite story unquestionably is. In the reign of *Edward VI.* as *Strype*

\* *Jewel's Defence of his Apology*, part II. p. 188.



tells us, Archbishop *Cranmer* having formed a plan of drawing up a book of articles, which should comprehend every thing essential relating to faith and practice, and in which all protestants might unite; sent letters to *Calvin*, *Bullinger*, and *Melancthon*, disclosing his pious design, and requesting "their counsel and furtherance." *Calvin* wrote repeatedly and freely to the Archbishop on this subject; and in the course of his correspondence, took the liberty of gently imputing blame to *Cranmer* for not having made greater progress in the reformation. *Cranmer* does not appear, however, to have been at all offended with *Calvin* for this freedom, but retained a high esteem and value for him, and kept up an affectionate intercourse with him to the end of life.\*

Archbishop *Cranmer*, not only kept up a friendly communication with *Calvin*, as long as he lived; but he also constantly consulted him, on all the leading questions connected with the reformation. On a certain occasion, *Calvin* despatched a messenger to *England*, with letters to the Duke of *Somerset*, and likewise to *Edward*, to whom he presented, at the same time, a volume of his Commentary, just before published, and dedicated to the King. Both the king and his council were much gratified with this communication; and Archbishop *Cranmer*, in particular, was so much pleased, as to send word to *Calvin* that he could do nothing more profitable to the church, than to write often to the King.†

Nor is this all. *Calvin* was not only respectfully consulted by the English reformers; but he had also much influence among them. That great deference was paid to his judgment, will appear from this fact, that on the first appearance of the *English Liturgy*, it prescribed *praying for the dead*, *chrism*, *extreme unction*, and other Popish superstitions. These *Calvin*, in a letter to the *Protector*, very frankly and decidedly blamed. The consequence of which was, that all these offensive things were left out, agreeably to his advice. Dr. *Heylin* himself declares that these alterations were made in compliance with *Calvin's* wishes.—"The first *Liturgy*," says he, "was discontinued, and the second superinduced upon it, to give satisfaction unto *Calvin's* cavils, the

\* *Strype's Memorials of Cranmer*, p. 407—411.

† *Strype's Memorials of Cranmer*, p. 413. Also *Christian Observer*, Vol. III. p. 628.

“curiosities of some, and the mistakes of others, his friends and “followers.”\* And Dr. *Nichols* gives us the same information “Four years afterwards,” says he, “the Book of Common Prayer “underwent another review ; wherein some ceremonies and usages “were laid aside, and some new prayers added, at the instance of “Mr. *Calvin* of *Geneva*, and *Bucer*, a foreign divine, who was “invited to be a professor at *Cambridge*.”†

Nor was the authority of *Calvin* without its influence, in drawing up the *Articles* of the Church of *England*. It is commonly said, by our episcopal brethren, that those articles are *anti-Calvinistic* ; and that especially on the doctrine of *predestination*, as exhibited in the *seventeenth* article, the reformers held, and meant to express, a different opinion from that of *Calvin*. Now it happens that this article itself bears the most unquestionable internal evidence of the contrary. The qualifying clause toward the end of it, which has been quoted as decisive proof that the framers rejected *Calvinism*, is nearly copied from *Calvin's Institutes* ; and the latter part of it is a *literal translation* of that reformer's caution against the *abuse* of this doctrine. For evidence of the former, see his *Institutes*, iii. 2. 4. 5. compared with the article. For proof of the latter, read the following—*Proinde, in rebus agendis, ea est nobis perspicienda Dei voluntas quam verbo suo declarat. Instit. I. 17. 5.* “Furthermore, in our doings, that “will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared “to us in the *word* of God.” *Art. 17th.*

Of the point of light in which *Calvin* and his opinions were viewed by the leading divines of the church of *England*, during the reigns of *Elizabeth* and *James I.* the following attestation of Dr. *Heylin*, a bitter enemy, affords the most unquestionable evidence. “It cannot be denied but that, by the error of these times, the “reputation which *Calvin* had attained to in both Universities, and “the extreme diligence of his followers, there was a *general tendency* unto his opinions ; his book of *institutes* being, for the “most part, the foundation on which the young divines of those “days did build their studies.”‡ Again he declares, “Of any men

\* *History of the Presbyt.* p. 12. 207.

† *Comment. on the Book of Com. Prayer*, Pref. p. 5.

‡ See *Heylin's Quing. Hist. Works.* p. 626, &c.

“ who publicly opposed the *Calvinian* tenets, in the University of *Oxford*, till after the beginning of King *James*’ reign, I must “ confess that I have hitherto found no good assurance.” He speaks of *two* divines, of inferior note, who *secretly* propagated other principles ; and compares these to the prophet *Elijah*, who considered himself as left alone to oppose a whole world of idolaters. Further ; in the reign of *Charles I.* more than 60 years after the final settling of the articles, when a suppression of the Calvinistic doctrines was contemplated by archbishop *Laud*, Dr. *Heylin* acknowledges, that such was the *general attachment* of the bishops and clergy to these doctrines, that the Arminian party did not dare “ to venture the determining of these points to a convocation.” And he again explicitly informs us, that, from the resettling of the church under Queen *Elizabeth*, to the period already mentioned, “ the maintainers of the anti-Calvinian doctrines were but *few* in number, and made but a very *thin* appearance.”\* In short, the sum of his representation, compared with other historians, is, that for 60 years after the articles were settled, only *four* or *five* anti-Calvinistic divines appeared, in both Universities, and the whole nation ; that out of this number *three* were actually *punished* for propagating their opinions ; and that the rest only saved themselves by silence, and discretion !†

The celebrated *Hooker* would have abhorred the thought of joining with Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* in their aspersions of *Calvin*. That truly great man, with all his episcopal prejudices, speaking of the reformer of *Geneva*, thus expresses himself. “ I “ think him the wisest man that ever the French church did enjoy, “ since the hour it enjoyed him. His bringing up was in the study “ of the civil law. Divine knowledge he gathered, not by hearing “ or reading, so much as by teaching others. For though thousands “ were debtors to him, as touching knowledge in that kind ; yet he “ to none, but only to God, the author of that most blessed fountain, the book of life ; and of the admirable dexterity of wit, “ together with the helps of other learning, which were his guides.” In another place, *Hooker* speaks of *Calvin* as “ a worthy vessel

\* See *Heylin’s Quinq. Hist. Works.* p. 626, &c. See also his *Life of Laud*, 147.

† See *Overton’s True Churchman*, p. 81, 82, 83.

of God's glory." And again he remarks, "Two things of principal moment there are, which have *deservedly* procured him *honour throughout the world* ; the one his exceeding pains in composing the *Institutions of Christian Religion* ; the other, his no less industrious travails for exposition of Holy Scripture according unto the same *institutions*."\*

Bishop Carleton in his *Examination of Montague's Appeal*, printed in 1626, and dedicated to Charles I. says, p. 97. "As for Calvin, his name and doctrines are made odious ; but why, I know not. What greater pleasure can a man procure to the enemies of the *truth*, than to speak evil and odiously of those men whose service God hath used, and made them *excellent instruments* to make the *truth* known unto us ? Some take it for a sign looking toward *popery*, when the members of our own Church offer such a service to the papists, as to speak evil of *them* that have been the greatest enemies of popery, the greatest propagators of the *truth*."

Dr. Hakewell, chaplain of Charles I. while Prince of Wales, in a work adressed to Dr. Carier, a papist, says, p. 135. "One of the main points you drive at is, to put us off from all fellowship, and communion with those Churches who acknowledge Calvin to have been an excellent instrument of God, in abolishing and suppressing of popery, and the clearing and spreading of his *truth* ; that so, being separated from them, we may either stand single, and be encountered alone, or return again to our old bias, and relapse unto Rome ; and so through Calvin's sides, you strike at the throat and heart of our religion."

Dr. Joshua Hoyl, Professor of Divinity in Trinity College, Dublin, in the reign of Charles I. in his *Rejoinder to Mr. Malone's Reply on the Real Presence*, dedicated to Archbishop Usher, in p. 654, &c. says—"That great instrument of God's glory, John Calvin, a man of whom I had almost said, as once it was of Moses, there arose not a prophet since like him in *Israel*, nor since the apostles' days was before him—His works shall praise him for wit, eloquence, fulness, and *soundness of divinity*."

On this part of the subject I shall content myself with one witness more. A clergymen of the church of *England*, now living,

\* *Preface to his Ecclesiastical Polity.*

who writes in the *Christian Observer*, in speaking of the disposition of many in his own Church, to vilify the name and opinions of *Calvin*, makes the following remarks.—“ Few names stand higher or in more deserved pre-eminence, amongst the wise and pious members of the English Church, than that of bishop *Andrews*. His testimony to the memory of *Calvin* is, that he was ‘ an illustrious person, and never to be mentioned without a preface of the highest honour.’ Whoever examines into the sermons, writings, &c. of our divines, in the reign of *Elizabeth*, and *James I.* will continually meet with epithets of honour with which his name is mentioned ; the *learned*, the *wise*, the *judicious*, the *pious Calvin*, are expressions every where to be found in the remains of those times. It is well known that his *Institutes* were read and studied in the Universities, by every student in divinity, for a considerable portion of a century ; nay, that by a Convocation held at *Oxford*, that book was recommended to the general study of the nation. So far was the Church of *England*, and her chief divines from countenancing that unbecoming and absurd treatment, with which the name of this eminent protestant is now so frequently dishonoured, that it would be no difficult matter to prove, that there is not, perhaps, a parallel instance upon record, of any single individual being equally and so unequivocally venerated, for the union of wisdom and piety, both in *England*, and by a large body of the foreign Churches, as *John Calvin*. ‘ Nothing but ignorance of the ecclesiastical records of those times, or resolute prejudice, could cast a cloak of concealment over this fact. It has been evidenced, by the combined testimony both of enemies and friends to his system of doctrines.’\* ”

*Dr. Bowden*, not content with aspersing the opinions of *Calvin*, goes further, and attacks, with great apparent cordiality, his personal character. Besides a number of reproachful epithets, which the *Dr.* throws out in various parts of his work, the following passage occurs towards the close. *Letter 20.* “ The return of *Calvin* evinced the gentle sway of presbytery. *Castellio*, (he probably means *Castalio*,) a man of great learning, was soon expelled, at the instigation of the reformer. A violent contest then took place between him and the Senate, about the election of a minis-

\* *Christian Observer*, Vol. II. p. 143.

“ter. It produced almost sedition. *Calvin’s* quarrels with *Perinus* proceeded to such a length that the council became furious against one another. And what do you think was the cause of it? Why *Perinus* thought it no harm to recreate himself now and then with dancing. But *Calvin*, although no bishop, played the tyrant, and forbad that amusement upon pain of excommunication. *Perinus* was not to be treated in that manner. He opposed such tyranny; and two of the ministers who joined with him, were turned out of their livings. The contention became general throughout the city, and the council, taking different sides, almost cut one another’s throats. One person was put to death for libelling *Calvin*. Another was banished the city for preaching against predestination. *Servetus* was burned for heresy. So much for the mother church of Prebytery.”

It is easy, in half a line, to convey a slander which it would require several pages to expose. I cannot help regretting that Dr. *Bowden* has permitted himself to believe and to retail all the unfounded charges against *Calvin*, which were first propagated by malice, and which ignorance and prejudice have, ever since, continued to repeat. It is impossible here to enter into a full refutation of these charges. I can only suggest a few hints for aiding those who have a disposition further to pursue the inquiry.

With respect to the case of *Castalio*, it is thus related by M. *Sennebier*, one of the most respectable biographers of *Calvin*, and whose testimony is entitled to the more credit, as he was an opponent of that reformer’s religious principles. “*Calvin* knew *Castalio*, at *Strasburg*, in 1539. He procured for him the place of regent in *Geneva*, in 1543. This man, who was a good humanist, but an extravagant theologian, translated the Bible into Latin. He endeavoured to make the Hebrews speak the language of *Cicero*; and even essayed to make them sometimes sigh the tender verses of *Ovid*. On this account *Calvin* strongly blamed his version, together with different sentiments which this singular man did not fear to advance. *Castalio*, feeling hurt, demanded of the council permission to dispute publicly with *Calvin* on the descent of Jesus Christ into hell. They refused him this permission. But from love to truth, and from regard to liberty of thought, they permitted him to open this dispute before the assembly of ministers. It continued a long time without any



“ success. *Castalio* was so irritated, that he attacked *Calvin* in  
 “ a sermon destined to resolve the objections that could be opposed  
 “ to the doctrine which he had taught ; and he so grossly insulted  
 “ the ministers of *Geneva*, that the council deposed him from the  
 “ holy ministry, and took from him the place of Regent. *Cas-*  
 “ *talio* retired to *Basil*, where he persisted in his extraordinary  
 “ sentiments, and his hatred of *Calvin*, until his death.”\*

The conduct of *Calvin*, in the case of *Perrin*, is thus stated, by the same writer. “ *Calvin*, in the exercise of discipline, saw only  
 “ the man who had violated his duties, in the man in office, who  
 “ had believed that he might be dispensed from them. He caused  
 “ to be cited before the consistory the wife of the Captain-*Gene-*  
 “ *eral*, *Ami Perrin* who had *danced*, *acted in a comedy*, and *blas-*  
 “ *phemed* in a particular house. *Ami Perrin* himself, whose life  
 “ was *very irregular*, was excommunicated, deprived of his office  
 “ of counsellor, and condemned two months, imprisonment. But,  
 “ though this man had always instigated the enemies of *Calvin*,  
 “ though he had caused all the difficulties that *Calvin* experienced  
 “ at *Geneva* from the government ; *Calvin*, nevertheless, employ-  
 “ ed his eloquence and his influence to cause the judgment against  
 “ him to be annulled ; and had the christian satisfaction of seeing  
 “ his mortal enemy restored to his offices, and delivered from  
 “ prison.”†

“ One person,” says Dr. B. “ was put to death for libelling  
*Calvin*.” This wonderful assertion refers to the case of *James Gruet*, who was beheaded *July 26, 1547*. He was a man notorious for his vice and profligacy—He, of course, hated *Calvin*, and abused him in the most violent manner. But this was not the cause of his death. In his sentence he is condemned, “ for having  
 “ spoken with contempt of religion ; for having maintained that  
 “ *divine and human laws* were the work of *caprice* ; for having  
 “ written *impious letters*, and *libertine verses* ; for having main-  
 “ tained that *fornication* was *not criminal*, when the two parties  
 “ were agreed ; for having laboured to overturn ecclesiastical ordi-  
 “ nances, and to shake by a petition the authority of the consisto-  
 “ ry ; for having *threatened* the reformers and ministers, and hav-

\* *Sennebie's Histoire Littéraire de Geneve*, Tom. i. p. 196, 197.

† *Senneb. Lit. Hist.* i. 200.

“ing spoken ill of them, especially of *Calvin* ; for having written  
 “letters calculated to irritate the court of *France* against *Calvin*,  
 “and having engaged the King of *France* to write to the council  
 “against him ; and, finally, for having *threatened* the council  
 “itself.”\*—Do you not admire the candour and impartiality of  
 “Doctor *Bowden* ?

The Doctor proceeds—“Another was banished the city for preaching against predestination.” This was the noted *Jerome Bolsec*, of whom Dr. *Watkins*, an episcopal clergyman, in his *Biographical Dictionary*, gives the following account : “He was  
 “an infamous renegado, who, from being a *Carmelite*, turned  
 “protestant, practised for some time as a physician, and married.  
 “He went to *Geneva*, and abandoned physic for theology ; but  
 “having avowed the doctrines of *Pelagius* in a public discourse,  
 “which was answered by *Calvin* on the spot, the magistrates, on  
 “account of his turbulent conduct, banished him from the city :  
 “on which he retired to *Berne*, where he raised a great deal of  
 “disturbance, and was then driven from that city. He returned  
 “after this to *France*, and went back to his old communion (that  
 “of *Rome* ; ) and, by way of showing the sincerity of his conversion,  
 “wrote what he called the *Lives* of *Theodore Beza*, and *John*  
 “*Calvin*, filled with the blackest falsehoods, and expressed in the  
 “most abusive language. He lived in a profligate manner, and suf-  
 “fered his wife to prostitute herself for gain.” *Sennebier* also in-  
 forms us that *Bolsec*, having adopted the sentiments of *Pelagius*,  
 came to publish them at *Geneva* as a missionary. He was censured  
 by the ministers, and banished by the council, after useless attempts  
 to silence him.—This is the man whose part Doctor *Bowden*, more  
 than once, indirectly takes, for the purpose of blackening the char-  
 acter of the venerable *Calvin* !

The case of *Servetus*, which has furnished to the revilers of *Calvin* a favourite theme of declamation, for near two hundred years, Dr. *Bowden* could not have been expected either to forget, or to pass in silence. He has noticed it in the usual style ; and charged it to the “tyrannical spirit” of *Calvin*, and the “gentle sway of presbytery.” On this accusation I will only offer the following remarks.

\* *Lit. Hist.* i. 202.

*First* ; it has never been shown that the death of *Servetus* can be justly imputed to *Calvin*. *Sennebier*, though no *Calvinist*, assures us that the imputation is a cruel calumny ; that the bitterest enemies of *Calvin*, who were contemporary with him, did not dare to advance it ; and that it has been since repeated and believed, only by those who were ignorant of facts. He declares that *Calvin*, so far from desiring the death of this arch-heretic, was anxious to prevent it ; that he warned him against coming to *Geneva*, and apprized him, that if he did come thither, he would probably lose his life ; which he concluded must be the case from the spirit of the laws and government of that city. This writer further asserts, that the council of *Geneva*, before passing sentence on *Servetus*, asked the advice of the Swiss cantons, who *unanimously* exhorted them to put him to death. And, finally, he informs us, that after sentence had been passed on *Servetus*, *Calvin* laboured to procure a mitigation of it, but without effect ; and that he sincerely deplored his fate.\* If this statement be true, and the author supports it by a reference to undoubted authorities ; then the representation of Dr. *Bowden*, or rather of those revilers of *Calvin* whom he has followed, is something worse than ungenerous.

But, *Secondly* ; supposing the fact to be as Dr. *Bowden* insinuates. Supposing it established that *Calvin* fully approved, and even procured the death of *Servetus* ; still it was evidently not so much the fault of the man, as the universal delusion of the age in which he lived ; an age in which liberty of conscience was not at all, either understood or admitted, by any denomination of Christians ; and in which the most pious, benevolent, and exemplary men were more or less chargeable with error on this point. It is certain that *Bucer*, *Oecolampadius*, *Beza*, and even the mild and gentle *Melancthon*, approved the sentence that was executed on *Servetus*.† It is certain that Archbishop *Cranmer*, and the great body of the English reformers, were decidedly of the opinion that he ought to have suffered death."‡ And it is equally undeniable, that the pious and excellent Bishop *Hall*, solemnly pronounced,

\* *Lit. Hist. de Geneve*, Tom. I. p. 204, &c.

† *Sennebier*. Also *Melancthon's Epistles*.

‡ See *History of Popery*, Lond. 4to. Vol. II. p. 352.

that, in that transaction, *Calvin* DID WELL APPROVE HIMSELF TO GOD'S CHURCH.\* To reproach *Calvin*, therefore, for not possessing that light which no man of his age possessed ; to attempt to fix a stigma upon his memory for an error into which he fell in common with all the best of his contemporaries, is certainly as unreasonable as it is unjust.

But, *finally* ; why do Dr. *Bowden* and his friends take so much delight in reproaching *Calvin* for a *single* supposed instance of persecution ? And why do they take so much pains to make it believed that the death of *Servetus* was the native product of the " spirit of Presbyterianism ?" Have these gentlemen forgotten the history of the Church of *England* ? Or do they suppose that *we* have forgotten it ? Have they lost all recollection of the conduct of their boasted favourites, Archbishops *Cranmer*, *Whitgift*, and *Laud*, to say nothing of other eminent dignitaries of that church ? Or do they imagine that our memories are as politely accommodating as their own ? *Calvin* is only charged with bringing *one* unhappy victim to the stake ; and even this is a false charge. But it is acknowledged, even by episcopal historians themselves, that the pious and excellent *Cranmer*, was active in dragging at least *four* persons to the flames, of whom two were *women*. In the reign of *Henry VIII.* the archbishop is expressly said, by *Strype* and *Burnet*, to have been concerned in burning *John Lambert*, and *Anne Askew*, for those very principles which he himself afterwards embraced.† And in the reign of *Edward VI.* he is confessed, by the same historians, to have " procured the death," (as one of them expresses it, ) of *Joanna Bocher*, and *George Paris*. The King was opposed to the execution of these persons, and signed the warrants for their execution with tears in his eyes, telling *Cranmer* that he did it in compliance with his persuasion, and in submission to his ecclesiastical authority ; and that if it was wrong, he, (the archbishop,) must answer for it to God.‡ In this representation, the episcopal biographer, Mr. *Gilpin*, in his *Lives of the Reformers*, concurs. "*Joan Bocher*," says he, " and *George Paris* were

\* See his *Christian Moderation*, Book II. Sect. 14. *Works*, Vol. III. p. 50.

† *Cranmer's Memorials*, Book. I. chap. 17. p. 65. Bishop *Burnet's History of the Reformation*, Vol. II. p. 112.

‡ *Hist. Ref.* II. 112.

“accused, one for denying the *humanity* of Christ ; the other for  
 “denying his *divinity*. They were both tried and condemned to  
 “the stake ; and the archbishop not only *consented* to these acts of  
 “blood but even *persuaded* the aversion of the young king into a  
 “compliance. Your majesty must distinguish, (said he, informing  
 “his royal pupil’s conscience,) between common opinions, and such  
 “as are the essential articles of faith. These latter we must, on  
 “no account, suffer to be opposed.”\*

But it is gratifying to know, that Presbyterians, instead of delighting to load *Cranmer* with reproach, for these instances of misguided zeal, have always treated his memory with a respectful generosity. They have seldom failed to charge this part of his conduct to the *delusion of the age*, and not to the *heart of the man* ; and have been ready to acknowledge, in the strongest terms, his excellent qualities, and his noble services to the church of Christ. And it is but justice to add, that the bishops and other leading divines of *England*, who were *contemporary* with *Calvin*, or who lived half a century after him, always treated his character with similar respect and affection, nor ever lisped a syllable in the strain of *Dr. Bowden*. To what are we to ascribe the different representation which is now so fashionable, and so industriously propagated among our episcopal brethren ? How shall we account for it, that gentlemen who abound in unqualified praises of *Cranmer*, and even of *Laud*, are not ashamed continually to reproach the memory of *Calvin*, with conduct in which they went far beyond him ? Can charity herself avoid suspecting, that it is the *man* himself who is hated, more than his alleged *persecuting spirit* ?

*Dr. Bowden* and *Mr. How* both throw out many reflections on that system of doctrine which is generally called *Calvinism*. The latter, in particular, speaks of it as a “detestable” system, of which he has no language adequately to express his “abhorrence.” It was my original intention to devote a whole letter to the consideration of this greatly misunderstood and abused system of truth. But having been already carried so much beyond the limits at first prescribed to this reply, I dare not so far trespass on your patience, as to enter into the formal discussion of a subject which has engaged

\* *The Lives of Reformers*, By *William Gilpin*, M.A. Vol. II. p. 99.

the attention of the strongest heads and best hearts that the world ever knew; and a subject as awful and difficult as it is interesting.

I cannot forbear, however to state a few facts. And when these are calmly considered, I think your surprise at the conduct of these gentlemen will by no means be diminished.

The *Thirty-nine Articles* of the church of *England* are undoubtedly *Calvinistic*. This is proved not only by the bare inspection of the articles themselves; but also by the known sentiments of those who formed them; and by the decisive interpretation of some of the ablest bishops, and other divines, that ever adorned that church.\*

The same *Convocation* which drew up the *thirty-nine articles*, reviewed, corrected, formally approved, and ordered to be published, as it now stands, the celebrated *Catechism* of Dr. *Nowell*. This *Catechism* is acknowledged, by the worst enemies of *Calvin*, to be decidedly *Calvinistic*. It is acknowledged to be so by Bishop *Cleaver*, who, a few years ago, gave a new edition of it. And yet the *Convocation*, which embraced all the principal dignitaries of the church, publicly recommended it, as “a standing summary of the doctrines professed in that church;” and many years after it was held in such high esteem, by Archbishops *Whitgift* and *Parker*, and other cotemporary prelates, that even *ministers* were enjoined to study it, that they might “learn true divinity from it.”†

The illustrious reformer and martyr, *Bradford*, a short time before he suffered, wrote and published a decidedly *Calvinistic* work on *election* and *predestination*, which he sent to Archbishop *Cranmer*, and to Bishops *Ridley* and *Latimer*, who all gave it their approbation; after which it received the approbation of “the rest of the eminent ministers in and about *London*.”‡

\* See *Overton's True Churchman*, passim. I know that this writer has made some mistakes. But when his work is compared with the able *Review* of it in the *Christian Observer*, an episcopal journal; and also with Mr. *Daubeny's* answer, and the review of the latter in the same journal, the mass of evidence in support of my position will be found irresistible.

† *Strype's Annals*, 313—316. *Life of Parker*, 122. 301.

‡ *Strype's Memorials of Cranmer*, p. 350. The editors of the *Christian Observer* attest that they have seen *Bradford's* treatise; and that it is unquestionably *Calvinistic*.



The famous *Lambeth articles*, formed in the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, are acknowledged by all who ever read them, to be among the most strongly *Calvinistical* compositions that ever were penned. Yet these articles were drawn up and signed by Archbishop *Whitgift*, that very prelate of whose character and principles Dr. *Hobart* frequently speaks in the most exalted terms, and whom he holds up to view as one of the most illustrious divines and fathers of the church of *England*.—The Archbishop was assisted in this service by the bishops of *London* and *Bangor*, and by some others. After receiving the public approbation of these dignataries, the articles were sent to the archbishop of *York*, and the bishop of *Rochester*, who also subscribed them. Thus ratified, Archbishop *Whitgift* sent them to the University of *Cambridge*, with a letter, in which he declared, “That these articles were not “to be considered as *laws* and *decrees*, but as *propositions*, which “he and his brethren were persuaded were *true*, and *corresponding* “with the doctrine professed in the Church of *England*, and “established by the laws of the land.”\* Nor is this all. It having been suggested by some, that the archbishop agreed to these articles, rather for the sake of *peace*, than because he *believed* them; *Strype*, his episcopal biographer, repels the charge with indignation; declaring that such an insinuation is as *false*, as it is *mean* and disparaging to the primate.†

We have seen also, in a foregoing part of this letter, by the confession of *Heylin* himself, an implacable enemy of *Calvin*, that the great body of the bishops, and other clergy of the Church of *England*, were *doctrinal Calvinists*, for more than half a century after the articles were formed. And we have found a modern episcopal clergyman asserting, on undeniable evidence, that “*Calvin’s Institutions* were read and studied, in both the Universities, by every “student in divinity, for a considerable portion of a century; nay, “that by a convocation held at *Oxford*, that book was recommended to the general study of the nation.”

All the delegates from the Church of *England* to the synod of *Dort*, among whom were Bishop *Carleton*, Bishop *Hall*, and Bishop *Davenant*, formally subscribed to the five *Calvinistic* articles drawn up and adopted by that venerable synod. On their return

\* *Strype’s Life of Whitgift*, p. 461—463.

† *Ibid.* p. 462.

return home, they were attacked by a certain writer, and charged with having given countenance to error, and also with having departed from the public standards of their own church. Against this attack they thought proper to defend themselves, and accordingly wrote a *joint attestation*, which contains the following passage. "Whatsoever there was assented unto, and subscribed by us, concerning the *five articles*, either in the joint synodical judgment, or in our particular collegiate suffrage, is not only warrantable by the Holy Scriptures, but also conformable to the *received doctrine* of our said venerable mother; which we are ready to maintain and justify against all gainsayers."\*

Again, Bishop *Hall*, in a work of his own, addressing some who had charged him and other bishops of his day, with entertaining *Arminian* sentiments as to the doctrine of *election*, thus indignantly replies to the charge—"You add '*election upon faith foreseen*.' What! nothing but gross untruths? Is this the doctrine of the bishops of *England*? Have they not strongly *confuted* it in *papists* and *Arminians*?† Have they not CRIED IT DOWN TO THE LOWEST PIT OF HELL?"‡

The same pious prelate himself tells us, that, after his return from the synod of *Dort*, where he had been an advocate of *Calvinistic* doctrine, and a warm opponent of *Arminianism*, he was distressed to find that heresy gaining ground in *England*. "Not many years," says he, "after settling at home, it grieved my soul to see our own church *begin* to *sicken* of the same *disease*, which we had endeavoured to cure in our neighbours."§

If all this be not conclusive testimony, that the *thirty-nine articles*, which Mr. *How* has recently subscribed are *Calvinistic*; that the reformers were *Calvinistic*; and that the great body of the English bishops and other clergy, were *Calvinistic* until the time of Archbishop *Laud*, then I know not what evidence can be called

\* See their *Joint Attestation*.

† It seems, then, that Bishop *Hall* was not only a *Calvinist* himself; but that he considered the body of English bishops, until his time, as having been *Calvinists* also. But perhaps Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* understand this matter better than the good bishop!

‡ *Defence of the Humble Remonstrance. Works.* Vol. III. 246.

§ *Some Specialities of the Life of Joseph Hall, Bishop of Norwich*, written by himself.—Prefixed to the 3d vol. of his *Works*.

conclusive. And yet, Mr. *How*, with the highest praises of those articles, and reformers, and prelates, and clergy, in his mouth, does not scruple to speak of *Calvinism* in language which could scarcely be more contemptuous, or more abhorrent, if it were acknowledged to be a system of the most undisguised blasphemy ! I am happy that it is not incumbent on me, either to account for this fact, or to frame an apology for it.

But you will, perhaps, ask are there no *difficulties* to be encountered in embracing that system of evangelical truth, which is usually styled *Calvinism* ? It ought not to be disguised that there are in this system real difficulties, which, probably, no human wisdom will ever be able to solve. But are the difficulties which belong to the system of *Arminianism*, either *fewer* in number, or *less* in magnitude ? Instead of this, they are more numerous, and more serious ; more contradictory to reason, more inconsistent with the character of God, and more directly opposed both to the letter and the spirit of his word. I rest in the *Calvinistic* system, with a confidence daily increasing, not only because the more I examine it, the more clearly it appears to me to be taught in the Holy Scriptures ; but also because, the more frequently and the more carefully I compare the amount of the difficulties, on both sides, the more heavily they seem to me to press against the *Arminian* doctrine.

It is easy and popular to object, that *Calvinism* has a tendency to cut the nerves of all spiritual exertion ; that, if we are *elected* there is no *need* of exertion, and if *not* elected, it will be in *vain*. But this objection lies with quite as much force against the *Arminian* hypothesis. Dr. *Bowden*, and Mr. *How*, and all *Arminians*, though they reject the doctrine of *election*, explicitly grant that, while *some* will, in fact, be saved, *others* will, in fact, as certainly perish. Now it is perfectly plain that this position is just as liable to the abuse above stated, as the *Calvinistic* doctrine. For a man may say, “ I shall either be saved, or I shall not. If I am to be saved, no anxiety about it is necessary ; and if I am to perish, all anxiety about it will be useless.” Would these gentlemen consider this objection as a valid one against *their* creed ? I presume not. But it has no more validity against *ours*. Another objection is equally common and popular. It is said, if none but the *elect* will be saved, how can God be considered as *sincere* in making the

offers of mercy to *all*? The *Arminian* is just as much bound to answer this question as the *Calvinist*. He grants that all men will not, in fact, be saved; he grants, moreover, that God foreknew this from eternity; and that he not only foreknew the *general fact*; but also the *particular persons* who will, and who will not, partake of salvation. How, then, we may ask the *Arminian*, is God sincere, on *his* plan, in urging and entreating all to accept of mercy? Again, it has been frequently asked, “If none but the *elect* will be saved, is not God a partial master, and a *respector of persons*?” But it may be quite as plausibly and confidently asked, “How can we reconcile it with the impartiality and the benevolence of God, to *save* only a part of mankind?” If salvation be his work, then, why does he not save all? Why does he make a distinction? And if it be *not* his work, then men *save themselves*. Will even Mr. *Hew*, with all his inveteracy against *Calvinism*, go this length?

But while all the objections which our *Arminian* brethren urge against *Calvinism*, lie with full as much force against their own system; there are others, of a still more serious nature, to which that system is liable, and which, if I were compelled to admit, would plunge me into darkness and despair.

Yes, my brethren, if I could bring myself to believe, that the infinite and eternal God has laid no *plan* in the kingdom of his grace, but has left all to be decided by *chance*, or *accident*, not knowing the end from the beginning—If I could believe that the *purposes* of Jehovah, instead of being *eternal*, are all formed *in time*; and instead of being *immutable*, are all liable to be *altered* by the changing will of his creatures—If I could suppose that, after all the Redeemer has done and suffered, the work of redemption cannot be completed, unless perishing mortals choose to lend their arm to its aid—If I could admit the idea, that God has done nothing more than decree, in general, to save all who may happen to believe; without any *determination*, or, which is the same thing, without any *certainty*, whether *few*, or *many*, or *none*, would be thus blessed—If I could suppose that God foresaw events as *certainly future*, which he had not *unchangeably determined* to accomplish, and which, therefore, might never happen—If I could suppose that the omniscient Saviour died with a distinct *purpose* and *design* to

save *all men alike*, while it is certain that *all will not* be saved—If I could embrace the opinion that real Christians are no more indebted to grace than others, having received no more than they; and that what makes *them* to differ from others is, not the sovereign goodness of God, but their own superior wisdom, strength, or merit; in other words, that they *make themselves to differ*—If I could admit the dreadful thought, that the Christian's continuance in his journey heavenward, depends, not on the immutable *love* and *promise* of his God; but on the firmness of his own strength, and the stability of his own resolutions; and, of course, that he who is the most eminent saint to-day, may become a child of wrath, and an heir of perdition to-morrow—In short, if I could conceive of God as working without any providential design, and willing without any certain effect; desiring to save man, yet unable to save him, and often disappointed in his expectations; *doing* as much, and *designing* as much, for those that perish, as for those that are saved; but after all baffled in his wishes concerning them; hoping and desiring great things, but *certain of nothing*, because he had *determined on nothing*—If I could believe these things, then, indeed, I should renounce *Calvinism*; but it would not be to embrace the system of *Arminius*. Alas! it would be impossible to stop here. I must consider the *character* of God as dishonoured; his *counsels* as degraded to a chaos of wishes and endeavours; his promises as the fallible and uncertain declarations of circumscribed knowledge and endless doubt; the best hopes of the Christian as liable every hour to be blasted; and the whole plan of salvation as nothing better than a gloomy system of possibilities and peradventures; a system on the whole, nearly, if not quite, as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned, as in the paradise of God.

But, while I verily believe all these shocking consequences to flow, unavoidably, from the rejection of *Calvinism*; while the *Arminian* doctrine appears to me inconsistent with itself; dishonourable to God; and comfortless to man; yet I dare not bring a *railing accusation* against those who embrace this doctrine; I dare not impute to them the consequences which have been stated. They neither acknowledge nor perceive them; and if

they did, would, no doubt, be as ready to abhor them as ourselves. Nor can I cease to cherish the animating belief, as well as to offer the fervent prayer, that thousands who now reject, in words, the doctrines of *Calvinism*, and entertain invincible prejudices against the system which is generally called by that name ; may, notwithstanding, for ever rejoice in these doctrines, and bless God for them in a more enlightened, and a more happy world.



## LETTER VIII.

## TESTIMONY OF THE SUCCESSORS OF THE REFORMERS.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

By the *successors of the reformers*, I mean those great and good men who adorned the protestant churches, and took the lead in the direction of their affairs, for sixty or seventy years after the establishment of the reformation. Some of these excellent men have been quoted by our episcopal brethren as witnesses in their favour ; especially some of the greatest ornaments of the Dutch and French churches. Mr. *How* speaks with confidence of their testimony, as decisively favourable to his system ; and Dr. *Bowden*, by referring, with approbation, to what Dr. *Hobart* has advanced on this part of the controversy, virtually speaks the same language.

These gentlemen, in giving this representation, surely count largely on the ignorance of their readers. For although, if one might believe *Durell*, and other collectors and perverters of scraps from the writers in question, they sometimes speak like believers in the apostolic institution of prelacy ; yet when we come to peruse their works, and especially to examine the passages in which they formally deliver their opinion on this subject, we shall find them, almost with one voice, speaking a language directly opposite to that which is ascribed to them.

The truth is, when the nonconformists in *England*, after the establishment of the reformation, began to revolt from the episcopal hierarchy, and to oppose its unscriptural pretensions, a number of the bishop, and other divines of the established church in that

country, wrote to some of the most eminent Presbyterian divines of the foreign reformed churches, soliciting their influence, and the authority of their names, to quiet the minds of the discontented. In answer to solicitations of this kind, some of the foreign divines wrote letters, in which they spoke politely and respectfully of the church of *England*; and plainly expressed an opinion that the nonconformists ought not to make the point of church government a cause of separation. Still, however, these men were Presbyterians in principle; they had solemnly subscribed Confessions of Faith, which declared ministerial parity to be the doctrine of scripture, and the practice of the primitive church; and when they came to discuss and decide the question concerning prelacy, they spoke a language corresponding with their creed. And I venture to add, that for *every* concession in favour of prelacy, which my opponents produce from the French, Dutch, Swiss, and German divines, who succeeded to the reformers, any man of reading might safely engage to produce *ten*, more pointed concessions from divines of the church of *England*, in favour of Presbyterianism.

It would be perfectly easy to fill a volume with quotations in proof of what has been advanced. The following selection will be sufficient to answer my purpose. It will be clearly seen, that, as the great body of the reformers never offered the plea of *necessity* for establishing Presbyterian parity; but steadily appealed to the word of God, and primitive usage as their warrant; so the great and excellent men who came after them, with scarcely any important exception, took the same ground, and made the same appeal.

The learned *Le Blanc*, a French protestant divine of great eminence who flourished in the age immediately succeeding that of the reformation, says, "It is the most general opinion of the *English*, that episcopacy and presbytery, are *distinct* offices; but *the rest of the reformed*, as also those of the *Augustan Confession*, (the *Lutherans*,) do *unanimously* believe that there is *no such distinction* by divine right; and that the superiority of bishops above presbyters is only of *ecclesiastical right*, and has been introduced into the church *by degrees*. In the ages after the apostles, a custom was introduced, that one of the presbyters should be chosen, by the votes of the whole college,

“to preside over the other presbyters ; and these, after a while, assumed to themselves the name of *bishops*, and, by degrees, gained more and more prerogatives, and brought their *colleagues* into subjection to them, until, at length, the matter grew up to that tyranny which now obtains in the church of *Rome*.”\*

The very learned *Chamier*, a French protestant divine of great distinction, contemporary with *Beza*, has been sometimes quoted by Episcopalians, as making concessions in favour of their cause—The following quotation will show his opinion of ministerial impurity. “Prelacy was not, by those who first began it, judged to be *absolutely* better than presbytery ; but only in a *certain respect*. Upon the same account we may likewise say, that *equality among pastors* is better in a certain respect, viz. for the avoiding of the tyranny of a few over the rest of their brethren, yea, of one over all. And how great an evil tyranny is, and how wide a gate was opened to it from the ambition for *this presidency*, experience hath, long since; more than sufficiently shown.”† In another part of the same work, he speaks still more strongly—“There is no one who doubts that this custom of giving one presbyter a *presidency* over the rest, was introduced by good men, and upon a good design. Would to God that it had not rather arisen from *carnal prudence*, than from the *direction of the Spirit* ! Would to God it had been attended with as happy and prosperous success, as it was introduced with applause.”‡ In the next chapter, after having shown at large how *episcopacy* introduced the *papacy*, he closes the account with the following remark : “Thus human wisdom, if once it decline but a jot from the original truth, becomes worse and worse.”§

M. *Danau*, a every eminent divine of the French protestant church, also contemporary with *Beza*, treating of the subject under consideration, thus writes. “So long as the *apostolic* constitution continued in the church, the presbyters that laboured in the word and doctrine *differed not at all* from *bishops*. But after that, by the *ambition* of those who presided over other presbyters,

\* *Thes. de Grad. Minist.*

† *Panstrat.* Tom. II. Lib. 9. Cap. 14. § 11.

‡ *Panstrat.* Lib. 10. Cap. 5. § 22.

§ *Ibid.* Cap. 6. § 18.

“ and took to themselves the name of bishops, the apostolic form  
 “ and discipline was abolished ; then the bishops began to be dis-  
 “ tinguished even from those presbyters that preached the word ;  
 “ and to these bishops, *contrary to God’s word*, the whole dignity  
 “ was ascribed ; scarcely any part thereof being left to the presby-  
 “ ters ; which thing, and the ambition of the bishops, did in time  
 “ ruin the whole church, as the fact of the papacy itself proclaims :  
 “ And so the apostolic episcopacy was abolished, and a *human*  
 “ episcopacy began, from which sprang the *satanic* episcopacy, as  
 “ it now is in the papacy.—The distinction of a bishop from a  
 “ preaching presbyter is *juris pontificii*, of pontifician and positive  
 “ right, being brought in after the foundations of the tyranny of the  
 “ bishops were laid ; but is not of divine right.”\*

The celebrated *Bochart*, a French protestant divine of great learning and authority, has often been quoted by episcopal writers, as having expressed himself in favour of prelacy. The following declarations from his pen are found in a letter which he wrote to *Dr. Morley*, an English bishop, who had requested his opinion on the subject. “ In the office of *Overseer* or *bishop*, there are three  
 “ things which we must not mix together,—the *πρεσβυτεριον*, i. e.  
 “ the *eldership* or *pastoral* office, which *scripture* ascribes to the  
 “ overseer or bishop ;—the *υπεροχην*, i. e. the *pre-eminence* above  
 “ other pastors, which the *ancient church* added to the bishops ;  
 “ and the *lordship over God’s heritage* which some in these last  
 “ times have strenuously advocated. The *first* of these is of  
 “ *divine authority*, the *second* of *ecclesiastical authority* ; and the  
 “ third of neither, but a mere *abuse*. The *first*, the church cannot  
 “ dispense with ; the *second* may be *borne* ; but the *third* ought  
 “ at once to be *rooted out*.”—In answer to Bishop *Morley’s* ques-  
 “ tion, whether it was better for the *English church* to be governed  
 “ by *presbyters* than by *bishops*, *Bochart* replies—“ The episco-  
 “ pal government was *not* of *divine*, but *ecclesiastical appoint-*  
 “ *ment* ; but since the *English church* has hitherto been governed  
 “ by bishops, that form of government may and can with propriety  
 “ be *borne*. For every where men live ; but men cannot live every  
 “ where in the same way. As in political society some prefer  
 “ being governed by *one*, and others by *many* ; so it is in ecclesi-

\* DANÆI. *Controv.* 5. Lib. I. Cap. 14.

“astical society. In *England* they are so accustomed to episcopal  
 “government, that though of no divine or apostolic authority, it  
 “cannot be dispensed with. In other places, government by over-  
 “seers, or ministers, or presbyters, is preferred. But in churches  
 “which have never been governed by bishops, they may be dis-  
 “pensed with, even though the civil government be monarchical;  
 “since this *new institution of human origin*, sprung merely from  
 “*pride and ambition*, and has never been of the least advantage to  
 “the church, which in every change of things ought always to be  
 “contemplated. And since it will neither diminish nor increase  
 “the glory of a prince, whether he receive his own crown from a  
 “bishop or pastor.”—In another part of the same letter, he says  
 —“If you ask for the opinions of the *ancients*, I entirely agree  
 “with *Jerome*, that, in the apostolic times, there was no difference  
 “between *bishops* and *presbyters*, or *elders*, and that the church  
 “was governed by a common council of presbyters.”\*

In this manner did *Bochart*, unquestionably one of the most learned men of his day, speak on the subject under consideration, when his opinion was formally requested. And when it is considered that he communicated this opinion to a respectable prelate; and, of course, had every inducement to speak as favourably of the English hierarchy as possible, the quotation carries with it peculiar weight.

But none of the writers of the reformed churches have been quoted, by our episcopal brethren, with more confidence, as a witness in their favour, than the very learned and celebrated M. *Claude*. The following quotation leaves no room to doubt what were his real sentiments on the subject in dispute.

“The apostles have left no successors in their office, which was  
 “*unique*. It was an extraordinary office; and they continue to  
 “teach and instruct the church in all ages, by their writings. The  
 “apostles first collected churches by their preaching. These  
 “churches, when assembled, with their advice and assistance, ap-  
 “pointed their own *presbyters* or *elders*, *overseers* or *bishops*; and  
 “they received the symbol, or ceremonial investiture of office, by  
 “the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery* or *eldership*: The

† See *Outhof's Verklaringe over denbrief aan Titus*. p. 294. § 210. and p. 297, 298. § 620.

“ office itself being conferred, and the vocation made by the election of the church. And so scrupulous were the apostles in appointing this order of things, which was to remain in the church, that, even in their presence, the ordination rite was performed by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”\*

Again, he says, “ As to ordinations of this kind, (by presbyters,) can the author be ignorant that the distinction of bishop and presbyter, as expressive of different offices, is a distinction which not only cannot be proved by the scriptures; but which contradicts their express language, in which it is plain that bishop and presbyter are only different names expressive of the same office? Can this author be ignorant of the opinion of St. Jerome, of Hilary, the deacon, and, after them, of Hincmar, which they have so explicitly given, concerning the *unity* or *identity* of the office of bishop and presbyter, in the earliest ages of the church; and concerning the origin of that distinction which afterwards took place between them? Can he be ignorant that St. Augustine himself, writing to St. Jerome, refers that distinction, not to the primitive institution of the ministry, but merely to an ecclesiastical custom, which had since grown up? Can he be ignorant that some of the fathers have taught us, that the ordination of a presbyter and a bishop are strictly one and the same, and not different kinds of acts, sufficiently expressing to us the identity of the offices? And as to the right of ordaining, can this author deny that St. Paul speaks of *the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*? Can he deny that *presbyters* anciently ordained equally with bishops?”† Further, “ The right of ordination, therefore, is one that *naturally belongs* to presbyters. And since they have been *deprived of it* by rules and constitutions which are *merely of human authority*, the right still remains essentially attached to their office, and they may justly reclaim it, whenever the state of the church will permit. And that I may declare my opinion with freedom, it appears to me that the *haughty* and *insolent* opinion, which maintains the absolute necessity of episcopal ordinations, and, with-

\* *Historical Defence of the Reformation*, 4to. ed. 1673. P. iv. C. 3. p. 342.

† *Histor. Def.* p. 372, 373.



“out them, annihilates the church, the ministry, and the sacraments, however pure the faith, the doctrine, and the piety of the church may be;—thus making religion depend on a form, and that form of mere human invention;—I repeat it, it appears to me that this insolent opinion carries on it the character of a *shameful corruption*; it bears the mark of *profound hypocrisy*, of a *pure pharisaism*, which *strains at a gnat, while it swallows a camel*. I cannot help having, at least, a *deep contempt for such opinions*, and *compassion for those* who are thus obstinate and headstrong in maintaining them.”\*

In 1680, when *Owen, Baxter, Alsop, Clarkson, Howe*, and other eminent English Presbyterians, had written largely and ably in defence of their principles; the episcopal writers, feeling themselves deficient in *argument*, made an attempt to support their cause, by soliciting some of the foreign Presbyterians to speak in their favour. For this purpose the bishop of *London*, in that year, wrote to *M. Claude*, requesting him to give his opinion of English Presbyterianism. *Claude* returned a complaisant answer, expressing great respect for the English church; gently blaming the nonconformists for separating from it merely on a question of *government*; and explicitly conceding that salvation might be obtained, and every spiritual advantage received under the episcopal regimen. Messieurs *L'Angle* and *Le Moyne*, being addressed in the same manner, wrote in a similar strain. These letters Bishop *Stillingfleet* subjoined to a work of his own, on *The Unreasonableness of Separation*, and pompously published as suffrages for episcopacy; and ever since, they have been confidently quoted for the same purpose.

*M. Claude* complained that his letter was published without his permission; that, a construction was put upon it, which he never intended; and that a use was made of it contrary to his wishes. These complaints were contained in letters addressed to the bishop of *London*, and to a lady of his acquaintance, in the year 1681; which, however, the Episcopalians of *England* took care never to publish; and which were never given to the world until after the death of *Claude*, when they were brought to light by his

\* *Histor. Def.* p. 374.

son. The following extracts from these letters will be sufficient to place the sentiments of the excellent writer in a just point of light.

“ I have received the letter which you were pleased to send  
“ me from the bishop of *London*, with the book which accompa-  
“ nied it. I shall have the honour to reply to the bishop, and to  
“ thank him for the present which he hath sent me. Neverthe-  
“ less, Madam, as I learn from different places, that many persons  
“ have not entirely understood my sentiments and expressions,  
“ touching the present state of the English church, I have believed  
“ that it would not be improper to explain myself more particu-  
“ larly to you, and to let you know the innocence of my thoughts  
“ and intentions. *First*: I can conscientiously declare that when  
“ I wrote on the subject to the bishop of *London*, it was not with  
“ the intention that my letter should be printed, or rendered pub-  
“ lic; and that I have even been surprised and astonished to see  
“ it as well in *French* as in *English*, at the end of the book which  
“ you have sent me, with two others, one of Mons. M. and another  
“ of Mons. A.—But besides this, be assured, Madam, that, in  
“ what I have written, I have had two things only in view; viz.  
“ to justify us from a calumny which some persons imputed to us,  
“ of believing that salvation could not be obtained under the  
“ episcopal government; and of aiding as much as my weakness  
“ was capable of, a good and holy union of the two parties.  
“ With respect to the *first*, I believe I have, with sufficient just-  
“ ness, explained the sentiments of all the protestants of this king-  
“ dom, and in particular, of all those who are honoured with our  
“ character, (the clergy.) And I am even assured that the  
“ English Presbyterians would not go so far as to contest the  
“ possibility of salvation under the ministry of bishops. They  
“ have, for that, too much light, wisdom, and christian charity.  
“ With respect to the *second*, I have endeavoured to keep all the  
“ measures which ought to be kept in so great and important an  
“ affair as this. I have explained myself only in the form of a  
“ wish, and in showing what I desired that the Presbyterians  
“ might attentively consider. I have not been silent with regard  
“ to the Episcopalians. I have condemned the excesses into which  
“ some of both parties have gone; and I have shown, as far as

“ my little wisdom enabled me, the reasons which should induce  
 “ both to a just and reasonable accommodation.”\*

In a letter to the bishop of *London*, of the same date, *M. Claude* writes thus. “ The Nonconformists complain, that the Episcop-  
 “ lians are as ardent in pursuing them with the penalties of the  
 “ laws, as if they were adversaries and enemies. They complain,  
 “ that your government is no less arbitrary and despotic with  
 “ regard to dissenting ministers, than that of the bishops of the  
 “ Roman communion. They complain, that you will receive no  
 “ one to the ministry, till he acknowledges, on oath, that Episco-  
 “ pacy is of divine right, which is a *hell* (*Gehenne*) to the con-  
 “ science. They complain, that, whilst you do not re-ordain the  
 “ Roman Catholic priests who come to you, you do re-ordain mi-  
 “ nisters, who come to you from beyond the seas, in the churches  
 “ of *France, Holland, &c.* They complain, that the bishops have  
 “ a rigid attachment to many ceremonies which are offensive,  
 “ and for which, nevertheless, they combat *tanquam pro aris et*  
 “ *focis*. In the name of God, my Lord, labour to remove these  
 “ grounds of complaint, if there is *any truth* in them, and if there  
 “ is *not*, to give information of the real state of the case. And let  
 “ all *Europe* know, that there is nothing which the glory of God,  
 “ and the love of the church can demand of you, that you are not  
 “ ready to grant.”†

It is evident, then, from all the documents which have come to light on this subject, that the English bishops, in order to draw from the foreign Presbyterians something in their favour, sent to them a disingenuous statement of the case ; that, under this deception, their answers were written ; and that, as soon as they understood the real state of things, they complained of having been treated with duplicity, and declared opinions very different from those which had been imputed to them. That this was the case with *M. Claude*, is certain ; and that it was also the case with his brethren, who shared in the imposition which was practised upon him, I have no doubt would appear, if we had access to their other writings.

\* *Les Oeuvres Posthumes, de M. Claude.* Tom. v. Let. 38.

† *Les Oeuvres Posthumes, de M. Claude.* Tom. v. Let. 39.

The learned *Daillé* is also frequently quoted by zealous Episcopalians, as having made important concessions in favour of prelacy. I cannot undertake to say that no incautious or doubtful sentence ever escaped from the pen of this illustrious protestant, on the subject of episcopacy ; though I have never seen any which warrants the construction of our episcopal brethren ; but I may venture to assert, that no candid man can peruse his *Sermons* on the *First Epistle to Timothy*, without being convinced that he was a decided and warm advocate of *ministerial parity*, as having obtained in the apostolic and primitive church. To prove this, the following extracts are sufficient.

“ Here the hierarchs, having their imagination full of their grand prelatures, of their bishoprics, their archbishoprics, and their primacies, do not fail to dream of one in these words of the apostle. That *he besought Timothy to abide still at Ephesus*, signifies, if you believe them, that he made *Timothy* bishop of the Church of *Ephesus* ; and not only that, but even metropolitan, or archbishop of the province ; and even primate of all *Asia*. You see how ingenious is the passion for the crosier and the mitre, being able, in so few and simple words, to detect such great mysteries ! For where is the man, who, in the use of his natural understanding, without being heated by a previous attachment, could ever have found so many *mitres*—that of a bishop, that of an archbishop, and that of a primate, in these two words, *Paul besought Timothy to abide still at Ephesus* ? Who, without the help of some extraordinary passion, could ever have made so charming and so rare a discovery ? And imagine that to beseech a man to stay in a city, means, to establish him bishop of that city, archbishop of the province, and primate of all the country ? In very deed, the cause of these gentlemen of the hierarchy must be reduced to an evil plight, since they are constrained to resort to such pitiful proofs.”\*

Again, he says—“ *St. Paul*, and all the company of pastors, laid hands on *Timothy* at his ordination. *St. Paul* as president, and the rest as *colleagues*, according to the practice which obtains among us, where it is usual for the person appointed by the synod first to lay hands on him that is ordained ; all the rest of the pas-

\* See his *first Sermon* on the *Epistle*.

“tors present, afterwards joining with him in laying on their hands  
“on the same person.”\*

The language of those divines of the *Lutheran Church*, who succeeded the reformers, was not less explicit and decisive than that of the other protestant divines of *Europe*. The following specimen of their opinions, is all that I have room to admit.

The learned *Frederick Balduin*, professor of divinity in the University of *Wittemberg*, and a *superintendent* in the Lutheran church, speaking on the subject in question, expresses himself in the following manner. “Hence the *papists* commonly cry out  
“against the pastors of our churches, as if they were not legitimate-  
“ly ordained, because they were not ordained by *bishops* ; and  
“they assert that neither *Luther*, nor any other orthodox minis-  
“ters, had the power of conferring orders, because they were not  
“*bishops*, but only *presbyters*. But our judgment is that *bishops*  
“have their pre-eminence in the church, *not by divine right*, but  
“by a *voluntary arrangement of the church*, which thought pro-  
“per to direct that, for the sake of order, a bishop, or he who was  
“first in the ministry, should ordain in the church ; the whole pres-  
“bytery being present, and laying on hands at the same time ; but  
“so, however, that if the bishop or first minister, should *happen*  
“to be absent, a presbyter might *perform the same duty* in his  
“stead, that nothing may be neglected in the church. For a bishop  
“is nothing more than the *first presbyter*, as *St. Augustine* tells  
“us, *Quæst. 101. ex utroque Testam.* Accordingly, ‘in *Egypt*,  
“presbyters ordain, if a bishop be not present,’ as *Ambrose* writes,  
“in his commentary on *Ephesians iv.* There is nothing, there-  
“fore, wanting to the validity of our ministry ; for with respect to  
“the difference which the *papists* make between a bishop and a  
“presbyter, as if the former only had the power of ordaining, *the*  
“*scriptures do not recognize it.* The scriptures ascribe the power  
“of ordination to the whole presbytery, not to a single bishop ; as  
“the apostle writes to *Timothy*—*Neglect not the gift which is in*  
“*thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of*  
“*the hands of the presbytery.* And the Apostle *Paul*, though not  
“inferior to a bishop in dignity, accepted ordination from the pres-

\* See his 31st *Sermon* on the *Epistle*.

“ bytery of *Antioch*, not from a single bishop; as we find related, “ *Acts* xii. 2. From all which considerations we plainly infer that “ the legitimacy of the ordinations in the Lutheran churches, “ whether performed by *Luther* or by other *Lutheran ministers*, “ cannot by any means be called in question.”\*

Another respectable authority on this subject, is the learned *C. Dieterich*, a doctor of divinity, and also a *superintendent* in the Lutheran church of *Germany*, who lived in the age immediately following that of *Luther*. He declares, that “ the ordination of “ ministers in the Lutheran church is by *presbyters*, and that this “ method of ordination has the *divine warrant*.” And a little after, he remarks: “ They (the *Papists*) rail against us, that we “ are not able to produce a regular commission, because we are “ neither called, nor ordained by *bishops*, having papal jurisdiction, nor have any legitimate claim to the apostolic succession. “ But let them rail. This is the old *Popish tune* to which our ears “ have become accustomed. Neither *bishops* alone, nor the *Pope* “ alone, have the power of ordaining ministers. The blessed “ apostles, without any parade of ceremony, were in the habit of “ introducing candidates into the sacred office by fasting, prayer, “ and the *imposition of the hands of ministers*. We imitate this “ apostolic simplicity. And where men are called, examined, “ ordained, and placed in the church by prayer, and the laying on “ of the hands of the *presbytery*, the ministry of the word and “ sacraments, the government of the flock, &c. are committed to “ them. Which kind of ordination, though not enjoined by absolute “ divine command, we nevertheless judge proper to be retained, “ partly because it is conformable with the practice of the *primitive church*; and partly, on account of its salutary effects.”† Again, he remarks—“ Scripture knows nothing of any difference “ between presbyter and bishop. Those who are in one place “ called *presbyters* are, a little after, called bishops; as in *Acts* “ xx. 17. 28. St. *Jerome* shows the same thing in his *Commentary* on the epistle to *Titus*. With *Jerome* agreed *Chrysostom*, “ *Theodoret*, *Primasius*, *Theophylact*, and other fathers. Even

\* *Tractatus Luculentus de Casibus Conscientiæ*. Lib. 4. Cap. 6. Cas. 4. 4to. 1628.

† *Analysis Evangeliorum*. Par. II. 47—49.



“ in the *canon law* the same doctrine is contained. For it is there  
 “ asserted, that, ‘ formerly a presbyter and a bishop were the same  
 “ thing.’ Even *Bellarmino* does not deny this, in his work *De*  
 “ *Clericis*, Lib. I. Cap. 12. for he says that the episcopal pre-  
 “ eminence of one was brought in *by the church*, as a remedy for  
 “ schism ; and quotes *Jerome* as his authority. How, then, can it  
 “ be of divine right ?”\*

Professor *Hulsemann*, a Lutheran divine of great eminence, and  
 who also lived in the age immediately following that of *Luther*,  
 in a commentary on the *Augustan Confession* expresses himself  
 in the following manner. “ The bishops succeeded in the place  
 “ of the apostles ; not, however, as to that which formally consti-  
 “ tuted them apostles, *Gal.* I. 1. *2 Cor.* xii. 11, 12 ; but as to  
 “ that which they hold *in common with presbyters* ; for, *by divine*  
 “ *right, they are in no respect superior to presbyters.*”†

*Gerhard*, a Lutheran divine of great eminence and authority,  
 who lived a little after the time of *Luther*, though he admits that  
 a moderate kind of episcopacy amounting to nothing more than a  
*standing moderatorship*, is lawful, and, in some cases, *expedient*,  
 yet he represents it as a *mere human institution* ; and explicitly  
 speaks of the doctrine that bishops are, by divine right, an order  
 superior to presbyters, and alone possess the power of ordination,  
 as a *Popish error*.‡

The works of few *Lutheran* divines hold a higher place in the  
 esteem of the churches of that denomination, than those of *Bud-  
 dæus*, the celebrated professor of divinity at *Leipsic*. This learned  
 theologian makes the following statement, with respect to the go-  
 vernment of his own church. “ The judgment of the divines of  
 “ our church, is this, that, among those who preside in the church,  
 “ there is, by divine right, *no difference*, on the score of dignity,  
 “ so that *presbyters* and *bishops* are *equal* : But, notwithstanding  
 “ that, there is no solid objection against introducing a certain  
 “ inequality, on the ground of *human expediency*, and giving to  
 “ one of the ministers of the word a sort of inspection over the

\* *Analysis Evangeliorum.* Par. II. 61, 62.

† *Manuale Confessionis Augustanæ vindicans eam*, &c. Autore *Johanne  
 Hulsemanno.* p. 519, 520.

‡ *Loci Communes*, Tom. 6. Col. 260, 261.

“rest, and, at the same time, a certain pre-eminence of character.  
 “Neither do we deny that this was the case in the ancient church;  
 “although the *abuse* which arose from this, in which the bishops  
 “usurped to themselves a tyrannical domination, we *greatly detest*.  
 “Nor can we be charged with having abolished the office of bishop  
 “in our church, as *Henry Dodwell*, and others have reproachfully  
 “alleged against us;\* since it is plain from fact, that we have  
 “only *restored* the office to those just limits, and to that true char-  
 “acter which it held in the ancient church. For we have not  
 “only given to ministers of the word that power which presby-  
 “ters enjoyed in the *apostolic church*;† but to certain of them  
 “there is allowed a kind of pre-eminence or inspection over  
 “others. These are called *superintendents*, or *presidents*, or  
 “*inspectors*, and, in some places, they are styled *bishops*.”‡ The  
 same writer, in the very section from which the above extract is  
 taken, more than once remarks, that the *Papists*, and the *English*  
*Episcopalians* are equally *in error* in asserting the divine right of  
 prelacy. He speaks of his having written two works on the *Origin*  
*and Power of Bishops*, which were particularly intended to oppose  
 the notions of certain high-churchmen in *England*. He declares,  
 that it is *notorious* and *unquestionable* that *Jerome* contended  
 zealously for the primitive equality of *bishops* and *presbyters*. And  
 he also asserts, that the office of *deacon* was, in process of time,  
 perverted from that *guardianship of the poor* which it was ex-  
 pressly intended to subserve by the apostles.

\* The learned *Dodwell* understood the government of the *Lutheran*  
*church* much better than Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*. He thought that,  
 on the principles of the *jure divino* prelatists, the *Lutherans* had *no*  
*bishops* among them; and the learned *Buddæus* confesses the fact; though  
 he contends that they have *such bishops* as the *ancient church* had.

† Here *Buddæus* makes a clear distinction between the *ancient church*,  
 and the *apostolic church*. By the *former*, he elsewhere explains himself  
 to mean that which existed *soon after* the apostolic age; by the *latter* he  
 means that ecclesiastical order which the *apostles* themselves established.  
 In the former he admits that a moderate kind of episcopacy was intro-  
 duced by *human wisdom*, and this he says the *Lutherans* imitate. In  
 the latter, he repeatedly and explicitly declares that ministerial parity  
 prevailed.

‡ *I. F. Buddæi Isagoge Historico-Theologica*, &c. Lib. II. Cap. v. § 11.

The same divine, in his able and learned *Preface to Bingham's Origines Ecclesiasticæ*, adverting to *Bingham's* high-church opinions, makes the following declarations. "But when he asserts, further on, that the order of bishops was *instituted by the apostles*, he will have very few to join him, excepting the *Roman Catholics*, and the high-toned Episcopalians in *England*. For there is not only *no vestige* of such a thing to be found in *scripture*; but the *very contrary* is plainly intimated there, viz. that presbyters and bishops were the same thing in the apostolic age." He then goes on to show that the *fathers* teach nothing contrary to this; and by a number of quotations from *Ignatius*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Irenæus*, and *Tertullian*, evidently establishes his point.

I have reserved for separate consideration, the testimony of the *Synod of Dort*; not only because the proceedings of that venerable assembly hold a most important station in the history of the Christian Church; but also because they have been misunderstood and misrepresented by my opponents, in a manner so extraordinary as to demand particular notice. Mr. *How*, especially, has allowed himself to speak on this subject in a way for which I really feel at a loss to form an adequate apology. To suppose that it has never fallen in his way to obtain correct information respecting it, is the most favourable construction which the case seems to admit.

It is generally known, that the synod of *Dort* sat in the years 1618 and 1619; that it was convened for the purpose of considering and deciding on the heresy of *Arminius*; that it was composed of delegates from the greater part of the protestant churches of *Europe*; that King *James I.* sent five delegates from the church of *England*, to deliberate and vote in the synod; and that of these delegates one was, at that time, a bishop, and two others were, soon after their return home, raised to that dignity. It is also well known, that the synod, after long and solemn deliberation, formally condemned the doctrines of *Arminius*, and adopted those of *Calvin*; and that the English delegates concurred, with one voice, both in the condemnation of the former, and in the adoption of the latter.

In speaking of the proceedings of this synod, in my seventh

letter, having no temptation to conceal or disguise the truth, I was careful to state, that "Bishop Carleton, and the other *English* delegates expressed their opinion, in the synod, *VERY FULLY* in favour of the episcopal form of government." This, however, does not satisfy Mr. *How*. He professes to quote my sentence, but adroitly leaves out the words "*very fully*," and then exclaims—"See, Sir, how you mis-state? They declared the *divine right of episcopacy*. Is there no difference between the two modes of expression? You seem to have been aware of the necessity of "concealing the true state of the case from your readers; thus "entitling yourself to the credit, at least, of caution as an advocate, "whatever may be thought of your candour as a man." Passing by the indelicate suggestion which this passage contains, as beneath a reply, I would only ask, where is the "*mis-statement*?" To say that they "expressed an opinion *very fully* in favour of episcopacy," is surely a mode of speaking sufficiently strong to cover the fact, even as Mr. *How* states it. Whatever "*difference*" there may be in the two modes of expression, there is certainly no *inconsistency* between them.

Mr. *How* seems desirous of impressing on the minds of his readers, that the English delegates had been *warmly solicited* by the Dutch to attend their synod; and complied with their solicitation, rather as a matter of *courtesy*, than of strict ecclesiastical order. He says, "The English bishops being *invited* to attend, *thought it would be wrong to refuse the invitation*; especially as it was their ardent wish to promote union and harmony among protestants." Now it happens that the *solicitation* was all on the other side. The fact is, that the states of *Holland* at first intended to form the synod of *Dort* of delegates from *their own churches only*: and it was at the express *solicitation* of King *James*, (whose request was communicated and seconded by *Maurice*, Prince of *Orange*,) that eminent divines deputed from *England*, and other reformed countries, were *admitted* to sit and deliberate in that assembly.\* Had Mr. *How* been acquainted with this fact, he could not possibly have penned the above cited paragraph.

\* See the *Dedications* of the *Acts of the Synod of Dort*. *Toplady's Works*, Vol. II. p. 253. *Christian Observer*, Vol. III. p. 632. *Bishop Hall's Works*, Vol. III. p. 15.

I had produced, in my seventh letter, the conduct of the English delegates to the synod of *Dort*, in accepting seats in that assembly, as an implied recognition of the Presbyterian church of *Holland*, as a true church; and of all the ministers of the continent who composed the synod, (though none of them had received episcopal ordination,) as true ministers of Christ.—And in this judgment the episcopal historian, *Collier*, concurs. Dr. *Bowden*, however, is of opinion, that the conduct of the English delegates does by no means admit of such a construction. Mr. *How* goes further, and even ventures to affirm, that the history of the English delegation to the synod of *Dort*, instead of affording the least countenance to the Presbyterian doctrine of parity, rather shows that the most respectable delegates to that synod, from the different reformed churches, really believed in the doctrine of prelacy by divine right; lamented their want of diocesan bishops; and ascribed their want of this ecclesiastical regimen only to *necessity*. Nay, he declares, that to attempt to construe the attendance of the English delegates as I have done, “is as *puerile* as it is *disingenuous*.” Nothing more is necessary than this simple statement to show Mr. *How*’s entire want of acquaintance with the history of that synod, and the import of its transactions; which, indeed, he betrays in almost every sentence he has written on the subject. Let me request your attention to the following particulars.

The ministers of the Dutch church had it in their power, at the time of the reformation, to retain diocesan episcopacy, if they had thought it either scriptural or expedient. The people, for a number of centuries, had been accustomed to this kind of ecclesiastical government. The magistrates made no objection to its continuance. And nothing would have been more easy than to obtain regular consecration for protestant bishops. No *necessity*, therefore, of rejecting prelacy, or of adopting Presbyterian parity, in *Holland*, ever existed, or was *pretended* to exist. But such was the knowledge which the great and good reformers, in that country, had obtained of the government, as well as the doctrines of the primitive church, that when they broke off from popery, they thought it their duty to restore the scriptural order, together with the primitive truth of the church. They had seen the mischiefs of prelacy. They knew that it had no divine authority for its support—And, therefore, when they threw off *the yoke of bondage*,

they rejected this, not by any means as the *worst*, but still as *one* of the errors of the Church of *Rome*.

The faith, government, and discipline of the reformed Dutch church were settled by a succession of national synods, beginning with that of *Wesel* in 1568, and ending with that of *Dort* in 1618 and 1619.\* The synods held at *Wesel*, in the year above mentioned, and at *Embsen*, in 1571, are considered as having formed the fundamental articles of that church, both with respect to doctrine and government. Among the proceedings of the Synod of *Wesel*, it was ordained, in the *second* article of their acts, “That besides forming a *consistory* in every congregation, the *Netherland* provinces should be divided into certain *classes*.”—And in the *third* article, they say, “As soon as it shall please the Lord to open a door for the free preaching of his word in the *Netherlands*, care shall be taken immediately for calling provincial synods, for arranging all matters,” &c. And it is expressly added, that in these judicatories the ministers shall preside *in rotation*.—In the Synod of *Embsen*, in 1571, their acts commence with the same regulation respecting consistories, classes, and synods, as were stated as having passed at *Wesel*, three years before. One of their articles begins with these words—“No church shall be considered as having authority over another church. No minister of the gospel shall be vested with power above another minister; but every one shall avoid the very suspicion, and watch against every temptation that might draw him to assume a superiority.”

It is observable that, for the formation of these ecclesiastical judicatories, this synod distributed the reformed churches into *three* great districts. One comprehended all the churches in the western part of *Germany*, and *Holland*, or *East-Friesland*. Another comprised what they called the *Churches under the Cross*, meaning those which were surrounded by papists, and exposed to the persecution of popish magistrates and ecclesiastics. And the last district which they named, took in all the *English churches*. The 12th article, which relates to these last, is very remarkable. “And the members of the church of *England* shall be *admonished* to

\* See a brief and perspicuous sketch, of the rise, progress, and principles of the reformed church of *Holland*, in a small book entitled, *Kerkelyk Hantboekje*, &c. i. e. *Church Manual, necessary for ministers and consistories*. Delf. 1738.



“ distribute *their* churches also into *classes* without any further “ delay.” From this article it is evident, not only that the Dutch church, at this period, was decidedly anti-episcopal in her principles ; but also that she wished and hoped to prevail on the Church of *England* to come nearer to her views of ecclesiastical government, if not to adopt them. There is peculiar emphasis in the word *admonish*, which conveys the idea of *exhortation* and *warning*, with some fear of *delinquency*.

In every succeeding national synod down to that of *Dort*, the same Presbyterian principles were decidedly avowed and maintained, as every public document respecting them unequivocally proves. In fact, with regard to the parity of ministers, and the government of the church by consistorial, classical, and synodical assemblies, there was not only a perfect harmony, and absolute decision, in all the synods antecedent to that of *Dort*, but each succeeding synod literally copied the language of the preceding ; and all, with undeviating consistency, opposed prelacy, and adhered to the Presbyterian model. I challenge Mr. *How*, or any of his friends, to produce a single authentic testimony which shows that, among all the discussions and transactions of the church of *Holland*, respecting ecclesiastical policy, there was ever so much as a *proposal* to make the government of that church episcopal ; or a single sentence from the writings of any respectable divine in her communion, which expresses a belief in the *divine right* of diocesan episcopacy, or even a *preference* for this form of church order.

With respect to the synod of *Dort*, every one who is acquainted with its history, and with its published *Acts*, knows that it was entirely and exclusively Presbyterian. To assert or insinuate the contrary, is to insult the understanding of every well informed man. The ministers who composed that synod, were among the most learned, pious, and dignified divines that ever adorned the christian church. In transacting the business entrusted to them, they bound themselves by the solemnity of an *oath*, to *adhere strictly to the word of God* in all their proceedings. And the indisputable fact is, that *these men*, acting under *this awful solemnity*, did, among other articles relating to church government, form and adopt the following : “ We believe that this true church “ must be governed by that spiritual policy which *our Lord hath* “ *taught us in his word* ; namely, that there must be ministers or

“pastors, to preach the word of God, and to administer the sacraments ; also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church.—As for the ministers of God’s word, they have equally the same power and authority where-soever they are ; as they are all ministers of Christ, the only universal bishop, and the only head of the church.”\*

But Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*, in the face of all this unquestionable testimony, still contend, that the principal members of the synod of *Dort* gave their suffrage in favour of episcopacy. In support of this assertion, they quote a laconic and equivocal reply of *Bogerman*, the President of the synod, to Bishop *Carleton* ; and also certain *private conversations* said to have been held by the bishop with the other members of the synod. But neither of these when examined, will be found to justify the use which is attempted to be made of them.

The nature and circumstances of the polite reply of President *Bogerman*, on which so much stress has been laid, were as follows. Bishop *Carleton*, when the article maintaining the parity of ministers came under consideration, rose in his place and opposed its adoption. He declared that diocesan bishops were of divine appointment ; that this order had been retained in the church from the time of the apostles ; and that he could by no means give his sanction to the article proposed. To this address the bishop himself expressly tells us, “*no answer was made by any.*”† And Dr. *Heylin* says, of the same speech, that “though it was admitted, and perhaps recorded, it received no other answer but “*neglect, if not scorn* withal.”‡

Bishop *Hall*, however, (though by the way, he was not present when this event occurred, having retired from the synod three months before, on account of indisposition,) gives a different account of the matter. Bishop *Carleton* himself, tells us that, in his speech, besides declaring his belief in the divine appointment of prelacy, he launched out in praise of this form of ecclesiastical

\* *Confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands*, Articles 30 and 31.

† See his *Protestation*, published after his return, and entitled *Appello ad. Cæsarem*.

‡ *Hist. of Presbyter.* Book 12. p. 400.

government, and spoke of its benign effects in *England*, in promoting union, order, and harmony in the church of that kingdom. To all this, Bishop *Hall* says, the only answer made was by the President, *Bogerman*, who simply replied, “*Domine, nos non sumus adeo felices.*” *My Lord, we are not so happy.\** Now as Bishop *Carleton*, who made the speech, declares that no answer was given to it by any one; as *Heylin* asserts that it was treated with neglect, if not with scorn; and as Bishop *Hall* was not himself present, at this time, in the synod; the probability is, that he has given an erroneous statement. But supposing it to be perfectly correct, to what does it amount? It might have been intended as a delicate sarcasm on the bishop, for his unseasonable introduction of this controversy. It might have been uttered as a mere compliment to a stranger, who was a prelate, and with whom it was not desirable to have any dispute, when the object of the synod was so entirely different. It might have been meant only to convey the idea, that the church of *Holland* was not so happy as to be in that quiet, united, and orderly state, which had been represented as existing in the church of *England*. At any rate the answer is perfectly equivocal, and furnishes no warrant whatever for the construction of my opponents.

But these gentlemen lay no small stress on another circumstance. Bishop *Carleton*, in the same *Protestation* which was before quoted, informs us, that “in his private discourse with some of the “most learned divines of the synod, he told them that the troubles “of *Holland* proceeded from their want of bishops; and that the “Churches of those provinces would never be quiet until they had “bishops to govern the clergy.” To these remarks, he tells us, they answered, “that they highly esteemed the good order and “discipline of the Church of *England*, and heartily wished the “same order was established in their country; but that they could “not hope for it in the present posture of affairs. They added, “that they hoped God would assist them by his grace, and that “they would contribute with all their might to the establishment of “that good order.” “Such,” the bishop adds, “was their answer “to me. This I think, justifies them sufficiently. It appears that

\* *Hall's Episcopacy by Divine Right*, &c. Part. 1. § 4.

“they do not love popular confusion, and a government destitute of all authority.” Mr. *How* must really be at a loss for testimony, when he can speak with so much exultation of this answer. It is nothing to the purpose. The bishop, according to his own account, had been declaiming on the advantages of Episcopal government, and on its influence as he supposed, in promoting the tranquillity, and happiness of the Church which he represented. To this, the Dutch divines, according to the same account, replied, that they had a very respectful opinion of the *good order* and *discipline* of the Church of *England*, and heartily wished that similar order and discipline were established in their own Church. But what did they mean by the “*good order*” and “*discipline*” of the Church of *England*? Did they mean her prelacy? This is so far from being *certain* that it is not even *probable*. There is every reason to believe they only meant to say, that they highly esteemed the *regular, settled, and orderly* state which the English Church had attained; that they should be glad to see a similar regularity, and quietness established among themselves; but that amidst so much confusion, they could hardly expect so happy a result. The truth is, the peace of the Church of *Holland* was, at this time, much disturbed by the controversy with the *Remonstrants*, which deeply agitated both church and state. In these circumstances, nothing was more natural than that the members of the Synod should lament their divisions, and express a desire to establish among themselves the same *quietness* and *peace* which the Church of *England* enjoyed; and all this they might say without having the least wish or preference in favour of her prelacy.

This then is the state of the case. The Reformed Church of *Holland* was Presbyterian from the beginning. By a succession of national synods the doctrine of ministerial parity was asserted, published and maintained, in the most decisive manner, not merely as dictated by expediency, but also as founded in divine appointment. The Synod of *Dort* spoke the same language, and maintained the same doctrine. Nay, with a solemnity which had taken place at no preceding synod, the members of that assembly, under the obligation of an *oath*, declared, that they considered themselves as bound to conform to the *apostolic model* of church government, and that *this model* was *Presbyterian*. And to all this evidence, Mr. *How* has nothing to oppose, but a few equivocal words of

some individual members of the synod, which probably had no reference to prelacy at all. Who, now, let me ask, has proved himself most liable to the charges of "extreme imprudence," and of having brought forward "puerile" and "disingenuous" allegations? Truly charges of this kind come with a very ill grace from Mr. How.

But we have another method of ascertaining the real sentiments of some of those divines who composed the Synod of *Dort*, besides their public conduct in that body. I mean by examining their *private writings*, in which we may take for granted they expressed their genuine convictions. From such of those writings as I have been able to procure, a few short extracts will be presented, and will be found conclusive.

*Gomarus*, professor of divinity at *Groningen*, was one of the most eminent of the Dutch delegates to that famous synod. On the subject of Episcopacy, he expresses himself in the following strong and decisive language. "The designation of *bishop*, as introduced *after* the apostles' time, is unknown to the Scriptures, in which it signifies the same thing with the *presbyter* and *pastor*. Where *Paul* recites the various kinds of Gospel ministers, as in *Ephes.* 4. 11, he acknowledges no such bishops distinct from Presbyters, and superior to them. To which purpose *Jerome's* judgment is memorable, which is extant in his commentary on the Epistle to *Titus* 1. 1, where, comparing the 5th and 7th verses, he infers that the *bishop* and *presbyter* are *one and the same*. Which point he doth, likewise, (in the same manner that we have done,) demonstrate from *Philip.* 1. 1. and *Acts* xx. 28, 29. and other passages connected therewith, concluding all with this weighty assertion, that *with the ancients*, bishops and presbyters were *one and the same*; until, by degrees, the care and inspection were put upon one; and that the *bishops* were set over the *presbyters*, rather by custom than by divine appointment. This custom, continues *Gomarus*, did, at last, bring upon the Church, the mischievous dominion of bishops, contrary to the apostle's command."\*

Again, "There is no *bishop* to be found set over *presbyters* in any place of holy writ. The distinguishing of bishops from

\* *Explicat. Epist. ad Galatas*, Cap. II. p. 487.

“presbyters, and setting them over presbyters, in an authoritative  
 “prelacy, took its rise *from no divine institution*, but from human  
 “tradition, *which had its foundation in pride.*”\*

*Polyander, Thysius, and Walteus* Professors of divinity in the Universities of *Leyden, Harderwick, and Middelburg*, were also conspicuous and active members of the synod of *Dort*. These learned divines were engaged in a joint work, under the title of *Synopsis Theologiæ*, which has been long highly esteemed in the church of *Holland*. Of that work, the following strong and decisive passages are a specimen.

“The apostle calls the same persons *presbyters* and *bishops*  
 “indifferently. Of this we have examples, in *Acts* 20, 28, where  
 “he exhorts the *presbyters* of the church of *Ephesus* to attend to  
 “the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them *bishops* ;  
 “—also in *1 Timothy* 3, 2. where he describes a bishop from his  
 “qualifications and duties, which same qualifications and duties,  
 “the Apostle *Peter* ascribes to his *fellow-presbyters* ; so also in  
 “his epistle to the *Philippians* 1. 1. by bishops he evidently  
 “understands those who presided over the church of *Philippi*,  
 “in the administration of the word and discipline ; and these  
 “he distinguishes from *deacons* who were entrusted with the  
 “church’s treasure, &c. &c.” After adducing several other  
 instances of a similiar kind, it is added, “The title of *bishop*  
 “in scripture does not denote the authority of one minister  
 “over other ministers of Christ, or any kind of prerogative enjoyed  
 “by one over others ; but is merely used to designate that watch  
 “and care over the church which belongs to an individual.”

Again, “The practice, therefore, of investing one person from  
 “among the presbyters with the authority of president, and giving  
 “him, by way of eminence, the title of *bishop*, was not a divine,  
 “but a *mere human appointment*, and was brought in *after* the  
 “apostles’ time ; as, after *Jerome*, many of the *papists* themselves  
 “confess, particularly *Lombard, Gratian, Cusan*, and others.”

Further, “The right of choosing pastors belongs to the church,  
 “and as well to the body of the people as to the elders ; but the  
 “right of *ordination* belongs to the *presbytery alone*. And accord-  
 “ingly, in ancient times, the *election* of pastors was made by the  
 “suffrages of the whole body of the people belonging to a church ;

\* *Explicat. in 1 Pet.* 5. p. 704.



“ but the *ordination* was performed by one of the pastors, in the name of the whole presbytery, and in the presence of the church, by the imposition of hands.”

In another place they declare, “ Although a few of the first pastors of our churches were ordained by *bishops*, by far the greater part have been more recently ordained by *presbyters*. The ordination of the latter is quite as valid as that of the former ; because bishops and presbyters were formerly the same thing ; and by divine right, the power of ordaining pastors equally belonged to both.”\*

In the same work, these divines, in the most explicit manner, assert the apostolical institution of *ruling elders* and *deacons* ; the former to *assist the pastor* in the exercise of *government* and *discipline* in each church ; the latter to *take care of the poor*. And they expressly declare, that they consider the Church of *Holland*, in retaining these officers, as following the example of the apostolic church.†

You will pardon me, my brethren, for this long, and I fear, tedious induction of authorities and quotations. It never occurred to me, before I saw Mr. *How's* pamphlet, that it was possible for any well-informed man, who valued his reputation, to give such a statement as that gentleman has done of the sentiments of the principal divines of the reformed churches. We now see of what he is capable. The next step will probably be to assert, that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, ever has been, and now is, decidedly prelatical both in its principles and practice. For, really, such an assertion would not be a whit more unfounded, nor fly more directly in the face of all authentic testimony, than several which I have been called to refute in the foregoing pages. It is plain, however, that the more deeply and extensively we pursue our inquiries, the stronger and brighter appears the evidence in favour of the Presbyterian doctrine. It is more and more manifest, that, in pleading the cause of this doctrine, we are pleading the cause of every protestant church on earth, excepting that of *England*, and those who claim descent from her as their parent.

\* *Synop. Pur. Theologiæ. Disputat.* XLII. § 29, 30, 32, 33, 47.

† *Ibid. Disputat.* XLII. 20. 59. 60, 65.

## LETTER IX.

## RISE AND PROGRESS OF PRELACY.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

DR. *Bowden* represents Presbyterians as believing that prelacy was *suddenly* and *violently* established ; that “ a wonderful revolution took place, calculated to influence the passions of thousands, producing violent convulsions, and virulent animosities.” And expresses great astonishment that *such* a revolution, introduced *at once*, should not have been more distinctly recorded by the early writers.

This is a total misrepresentation. Presbyterians believe and affirm, with *Jerome*, that prelacy arose “ *by little and little.*” They attribute its introduction to causes quite sufficient to account for the fact, without producing the convulsions and noise which fill the imagination of Dr. *Bowden*. These causes were, the facility, the indolence, and the inconsideration of some ; the ambition of others ; the precedency of standing moderators ; the veneration paid to senior ministers, and such as were of superior talents and influence ; the respect attached to those who resided in large cities, and other considerations of a similar kind. With such causes as these incessantly at work, who can fail to consider as the most probable of all events, that which Dr. B. represents as altogether impossible ?

But Dr. *Bowden* thinks it utterly incredible that the clergy in the second or third centuries should have been guilty of usurping power, or of struggling for pre-eminence. If we may believe him

they were too pious, disinterested, and humble, to admit the suspicion of selfishness or ambition having any place among them. "Surely," says he, "men of such distinguished virtue and piety, as the bishops of that period are universally acknowledged to have been, could not have entertained a thought so inconsistent with a pure conscience, with peace of mind, and with the hope of future happiness. Could men who displayed all the meekness and humility of Christians, have attempted a plan of domination so completely at variance with these virtues? Could men who endured every thing for the sake of Christ, violate his sacred institution? Could men, who, to save themselves from the most excruciating torments, would not offer incense at the idol altars, deliberately associate for the purpose of acquiring a trifling authority over their brethren? What! *conscientious* in every thing relating to christian purity, to christian manners, and yet *profligate* as to the constitution of the christian church! Gross inconsistency! Palpable contradiction!" Again—"What was the motive that influenced a few presbyters to attempt an assumption of superiority over their brethren? Was it a desire of *temporal power*? That was entirely out of the question, without the aid of civil authority. And every one knows that kind of authority was exerted for the destruction of the church. Was it the love of *wealth*? None resulted from the acquisition, or *could* result from it. The people were generally poor, and the bishops, as well as the presbyters and deacons were maintained out of the offerings at the altar; and *scanty* was the fare that proceeded from that source. Was it the love of *ease* and *security*? That could not be; for episcopal superiority greatly increased the labours of the bishops, and exposed them to almost certain destruction. If, then, neither dominion, nor wealth, nor ease, nor security, could possibly be the motives for so daring an attempt as to deprive the presbyters of their most sacred rights, those ambitious spirits, as you deem them, must have acted without any motive, which is evidently inconsistent with the very nature and constitution of the human mind."

It is really putting one's patience to a very severe test to find an opponent so frequently alluding to his own superior "scholarship" and reading, and at the same time permitting himself to write in this manner. What! no clerical ambition! No strife about pre-

eminence? No ecclesiastical usurpation in those early ages? It would have been just as reasonable, and just as true, if he had said that the gospel was preached in those days by none but *angels*.—But let us attend to a few facts.

Passing by several cases in point which occurred during the the lives, and under the immediate eye of the apostles, when, as St. *Paul* himself assures us, *the mystery of iniquity had already begun to work*, let me ask, Was there no spirit of domination manifested in the fierce dispute between *Victor*, bishop of *Rome*, and *Polycrates*, of *Ephesus*, which took place in the second century, as related by *Eusebius*? Was no love of pre-eminence displayed by *Cerinthus* and *Basilides*, whose burning desire was “to be “accounted great apostles?” Did *Montanus*, in the same century, exhibit no ambition in broaching his celebrated heresy? Was *Samosatenus*, in the third wholly free from the same charge? Did *Demetrius* of *Alexandria*, discover nothing of an aspiring temper, when he sickened with envy at the fame and the success of *Origen*? Are there no accounts of *Novatus* having sought, ambitiously and fraudulently, to obtain the bishopric of *Rome*? Did not his contemporary, *Felicissimus*, make a vigorous attempt to supplant *Cyprian*, as bishop of *Carthage*? Was not *Cyprian* brought in to be bishop in that city, by the influence of the people, in opposition to the majority of the presbyters, some of whom were anxious to obtain the place for themselves? And did there not hence arise frequent collisions between him and them, and at length an open rupture? I ask, are any of these things related in the early history of the church? And can any man, with such records before him, lay his hand on his heart, and assert that there were no symptoms of a spirit of ambition and domination in those times?

But I will not content myself with this general reference to the early conflicts of selfishness and ambition. The following specific quotations will be more than sufficient, if I do not mistake, to cover Dr. *Bowden* with confusion.

*Hermas*, one of the earliest fathers whose writings are extant, says, in his *Pastor*, “As for those who had their rods green, but “yet cleft; they are such as were always faithful and good; but “they had some *envy* and *strife* among themselves, concerning “*dignity* and *pre-eminence*. Now all such are vain and without

“ understanding, as contend with one another about these things. “ Nevertheless, seeing they are *otherwise* good, if, when they shall “ hear these commands, they shall amend themselves, and shall, “ at my persuasion, suddenly repent ; they shall, at last, dwell in “ the tower, as they who have truly and worthily repented. But “ if any one shall again return to his dissensions, he shall be shut “ out of the tower, and lose his life. For the life of those who “ keep the commandments of the Lord, consists in doing what “ they are commanded ; not in *principality*, or in any other “ *dignity*.”\*

*Hegesippus*, who lived in the *second* century, and who was the first father who undertook to compose a regular ecclesiastical history, writes thus. “ When *James*, the just, had been martyred “ for the same doctrine which our Lord preached, *Simon*, the son “ of *Cleophas*, was constituted bishop with universal preference, “ because he was the Lord’s near kinsman. Wherefore they “ called that church a pure virgin, because it was not defiled with “ corrupt doctrine. But *Thebuli*, because he was not made bishop, “ endeavoured to corrupt the church ; being one of the seven here- “ tics among the people, whereof was *Simon*, of whom the *Simo-* “ *nians*.”†

Dr. *Bowden* represents the age of *Cyprianas* among the very purest periods of the Christian church, and quotes that father with a frequency and a confidence which evince the highest respect for his authority. The following passages will show how far the illustrious pastor of *Carthage* considered the bishops of his day as beyond the reach of selfishness and ambition.

“ A long continuance of peace and security‡ had relaxed the “ rigour of that holy discipline which was delivered to us from “ above. All were set upon an immeasurable increase of gain ; “ and, forgetting how the first converts to our religion had behaved “ under the personal direction and care of the Lord’s apostles, or “ how all ought in after times to conduct themselves ; the *love of* “ *money* was their darling passion, and the master spring of all

\* *Simil.* 8. § 7.

† See *fragments* of this writer preserved in *Eusebius*, Lib. iv. Cap. 22.

‡ They had been free from persecution only about thirty eight years.

“ their actions. The religion of the clergy slackened and decayed ;  
 “ the faith of priests and deacons grew languid and inactive ;  
 “ works of charity were discontinued ; and an universal license  
 “ and corruption prevailed. Divers *bishops*, who should have  
 “ taught, both by their example and persuasion, neglecting their  
 “ high trust, and their commission from above, entered upon the  
 “ management of secular affairs ; and leaving their chair, and their  
 “ charge with it, wandered about, from place to place in different  
 “ provinces, upon *mercantile* business, and in quest of *disreputable*  
 “ *gain*. Thus the poor of the church were miserably neglected,  
 “ while the *bishops*, who should have taken care of them, were in-  
 “ tent upon nothing but their own *private profit*, which they were  
 “ forward to advance at *any rate*, and by any, even the *foulest*  
 “ *methods*.”\*

Speaking of *Cornelius*, who had been made *bishop*, *Cyprian* says, “ In the next place, he neither *desired*, nor *canvassed* for  
 “ the dignity conferred upon him ; much less did he *invade it*, as  
 “ some others would, who were actuated by a great and lofty con-  
 “ ceit of their own qualifications ; but peaceably and modestly, like  
 “ such as are called of God to this office.—Instead of *using violence*,  
 “ as a certain person in this case *hath done*, to be made a bishop,  
 “ he *suffered* violence, and was raised to his dignity by force and  
 “ compulsion.”†

The same father, in the same epistle, has the following passage.  
 “ Unless you can think him a bishop, who, when another was or-  
 “ dained by sixteen of his brethren bishops, would obtrude upon  
 “ the church a spurious and foreign bishop, ordained by a parcel  
 “ of renegadoes and deserters ; and that by *canvassing* and  
 “ *intriguing* for it.”‡

*Cyprian* speaks also of a certain *deacon* who had been deposed from his “ sacred diaconate, on account of his *fraudulent* and  
 “ *sacriligious* misapplication of the church’s money to his own  
 “ private use ; and by his denial of the widows’ and orphans’  
 “ pledges deposited with him.”§

*Origen*, the contemporary of *Cyprian*, more than once lashes the clergy of his day for their vices. The following passage is

\* *De Lapsis*. § 4.

† *Ibid*.

‡ *Epist.* 55.

§ *Epist.* 52.



surely strong enough, were there no other, to take away all doubt. "If Christ justly wept over *Jerusalem*, he may *now*, on much better grounds, *weep over the church*, which was built to the end that it might be an house of prayer; and yet, through the *filthy usury* of some, (and I wish these were not even the *pastors* of the people,) is made a *den of thieves*. But I think that that which is written concerning the sellers of doves, doth agree to those who commit the churches to *greedy, tyrannical, unlearned, and irreligious bishops, presbyters, and deacons.*"\* The same father elsewhere declares: "*We* are such as that we sometimes in *pride* go beyond even the wickedest of the princes of the gentiles; and are just at the point of procuring for ourselves *splendid guards*, as if we were kings, making it our study moreover to be a terror to others, and giving them, especially if they be poor, very uneasy access. We are to them, when they come and seek any thing from us, more *cruel* than are even *tyrants*, or the cruelest princes to their supplicants. And you may see, even in the greater part of lawfully constituted churches, especially those of greater cities, how the *pastors* of God's people, suffer none, though they were even the chiefest of Christ's disciples, to be equal with themselves."

*Eusebius*, who lived in the next century, writes in the same strain concerning the age of *Cyprian*. "When, through too much liberty, we fell into sloth and negligence; when every one began to *envy* and *backbite* another; when we waged, as it were, an intestine war amongst ourselves, with words as with swords; *pastors* rushed against *pastors*, and people against people, and strife and tumult, deceit and guile advanced to the highest pitch of wickedness.—Our *pastors*, despising the rule of religion, *strove mutually with one another*, studying nothing more than how to *outdo each other* in strife, emulations, hatred, and mutual enmity; *proudly usurping principalities*, as so many places of *tyrannical domination*. Then the Lord covered the daughter of *Zion* with a cloud in his anger."‡

Nay, Archbishop *Whitgift*, with all his episcopal partialities, was constrained to acknowledge the ambitious and aspiring temper which disgraced many bishops even as early as the time of

\* *In Matt.* p. 441.

† *Ibid.* p. 420.

‡ *Hist. Eccles. Lib. VIII. Cap. I.*

*Cyprian*. "There was great contention," says he, "among the bishops in the council of *Nice*, insomuch that even in the presence of the Emperor, they ceased not to libel one against another. What bitterness and cursing was there between *Epiphanius* and *Chrysostom*! What jarring between *Jerome* and *Augustine*! Bishops shall not now need to live by *pilling* and *polling*, as it seems they did in *Cyprian's* time; for he complaineth thereof in his sermon *De Lapsis*."\*

With *Whitgift* agrees his contemporary *Rigaltius*, who was so much distinguished for his learned annotations on the works of *Cyprian*. Speaking of *Cyprian's* age, and of the deacon's office, he says, "By little and little, and from small beginnings, a kingdom, and a love of dominion entered into the church.—In the apostles' time there were only *deacons*; *Cyprian's* age admitted *sub-deacons*; the following age *arch-deacons*, and then *arch-bishops* and *patriarchs*."

These extracts are produced, not to blacken the ministerial character; but to establish the *fact*, which Dr. *Bowden* denies, that clerical ambition, and clerical encroachments were familiarly known, even during that period which he pronounces the purest that was ever enjoyed by the christian church. I certainly have no interest, and can take no pleasure in depicting the foibles, the strife, and the vices, of the clergy in any age. But when assertions are made respecting them as directly contradictory to all history, as they are contrary to the course of depraved human nature; and especially when these assertions are triumphantly employed as arguments to establish other assertions equally unfounded, it is time to vindicate the truth. To do this, in the present case, is an easy task. The man who, after perusing the foregoing extracts, can dare to say, that the clergy of the first three centuries, were all too pious and disinterested to admit the suspicion, that they aspired to titles and honours, and intrigued for the attainment of episcopal chairs, must have a hardihood of incredulity, or an obliquity of perception truly extraordinary. We have seen that *Hermas* plainly refers to certain ecclesiastics of his time, who had "envy and strife among themselves concerning dignity and pre-eminence." *Hegesippus* goes further, and points out the case of a particular

\* *Defence of his Answer against Cartwright*, p. 472. &c.

individual, who ambitiously aspired to the office of bishop, and was exceedingly disappointed and mortified at not obtaining it. *Cyprian* expressly declares not only that a spirit of intrigue, of worldly gain, and of ecclesiastical domination, *existed* among the clergy of his day, but that such a spirit was awfully *prevalent* among them. *Eusebius* gives us similar information in still stronger terms. Archbishop *Whitgift* makes the same acknowledgment, more particularly with respect to the *bishops* of that period. And even Dr. *Bowden* himself, forgetting his own assertions, unwarily acknowledges, in several other parts of his work, that a number of persons, as early as the days of *Cyprian*, and before his time, who aspired to the office of bishop, and who used every effort and artifice to attain it, on being disappointed, distinguished themselves as *heretics* or *schismatics*, and became the pests of the church. Was there no spirit of ambition and domination among such men? Why did they aspire to the office of bishop? Was there nothing in that office to attract their regard, or to excite their cupidity? Or did they act without motive? Surely this gentleman needs to have some one at hand to refresh his memory, and to prevent him from warring against his own cause. But a man must be wary and ingenious indeed, who can be consistent when truth is against him.

Still, however, the question recurs: What, in those days of persecution and peril, before Christianity was established; when the powers of the world were leagued against it; and when every Christian pastor especially held a station of much self-denial and danger, what could induce any selfish or ambitious man to desire the pastoral office, and to intrigue for the extension of the powers and honours of that office? When my opponents can tell me what induced *Judas Iscariot* to follow Christ at the risk of his life; when they can tell me what impelled *Diotrephes* to *desire the pre-eminence* in the church; or what were the objects of *Demas*, *Hymeneus*, and *Alexander*, in their restless and ambitious conduct, while *Calvary* was yet smoking with the blood of their crucified Lord, and while their own lives were every moment exposed to the rage of persecution;—when my opponents can tell me what actuated these men, I shall be equally ready to assign a reason for the early rise and progress of prelacy.

But there is no need of retreating into the obscurity of conjecture,

when causes enough to satisfy every mind may easily be assigned. If Dr. *Bowden* does not know that there are multitudes of men, in all ages, in the church, and out of it, who are ready to court distinction, merely for distinction's sake, and at the evident hazard of their lives, he is less acquainted both with human nature and with history than I have been accustomed to suppose him. But this is not all. It is a notorious fact, notwithstanding all the round assertions of Dr. *Bowden* to the contrary, that the office of bishop, even in very early times, had much to attract the *cupidity* as well as the *ambition* of selfish and aspiring men. The *revenues* of the primitive church were large and alluring. It is granted that, during the first three centuries, the church held little or no *real* property; as the Roman laws did not allow any person to give or bequeath real estates to ecclesiastical bodies, without the consent of the senate or the Emperor. The *contributions*, however, which were made to the church, for the support of the clergy, the poor, &c. were immense. During the apostolic age, the proceeds of the sale of real estates were devoted to ecclesiastical and charitable purposes, and laid at the apostles' feet. We find the gentile churches contributing liberally to the relief of the churches of *Judea*, in *Acts* xi. 29. *Rom.* xv. 26. *1 Corinth.* xvi. 1. and *2 Corinth.* viii. The same liberality manifested itself in subsequent times.\* So ample were the funds of the church of *Rome*, about the middle of the second century, that they were adequate not only to the support of her own clergy and poor members; but also to the relief of other churches, and of a great number of Christian captives in the several provinces, and of such as were condemned to the mines.† Such was the wealth of the same church, in the third century, that it was considered as an object not unworthy of imperial rapacity.

\* One cause of the liberality of the primitive Christians in their contributions to the church, was the notion which generally prevailed, that the *end of the world* was at hand. This notion was adopted by some of the early fathers, and propagated among the people with great diligence. *Cyprian* taught, in his day, with great confidence, that the dissolution of the world was but a few years distant. *Epist. ad Thibart.* The tendency of this opinion to diminish the self-denial of parting with temporal wealth is obvious. See Father *Paul's Hist. of Benefices and Revenues.* Chap. II.

† Father *Paul's History of Ecclesiastical Benefices and Revenues,* Chap. III.

By order of the Emperor *Decius*, the Roman deacon *Laurentius* was seized, under the expectation of finding in his possession the treasures of the church, and of transferring them to the coffers of the Emperor : But the vigilant deacon, fearing the avarice of the tyrant, had distributed them, as usual, when a persecution was expected. *Prudentius* introduces an officer of the Emperor, thus addressing the deacon : *Quod Cæsaris scis, Cæsari da, nempe justum postulo ; ni fallor, haud ullam tuus signat Deus pecuniam.* i. e. *Give to Cæsar what you know to be his, I ask what is just ; for if I mistake not, your God coins no money.\**

Now the revenues of the churches, whether great or small were at the disposal of the bishops. The deacons executed their orders. Of course they had every opportunity of enriching themselves at the expense of the church. And that they embraced this opportunity, is attested by *Cyprian*, who laments the fact, and is of opinion that the persecution which took place in the reign of *Decius*, was intended by God to punish a guilty people, and to purge this corruption from his church.† And yet, in the face of all this testimony, Dr. *Bowden* has permitted himself to assert, that there was *no temptation*, either before or during the age of *Cyprian*, to induce any man to desire the office of a bishop ; and especially that it was impossible for any to be moved by the love of *wealth* to seek that office, because no acquisitions of that kind “ resulted from it, or *could* result from it !” It is really amazing that gentlemen can so entirely close their eyes against the light of all authentic history. If Dr. *Bowden* were an ardent and incautious young man who had but lately commenced the examination of this subject, he might be pardoned on the score of ignorance ; but to a gentleman of his long experience and standing in the controversy, it is difficult to suppose this apology applicable.

One of the arguments which I adduced in support of the gradual introduction of prelacy, was the fact, that *metropolitans*, or *archbishops*, though acknowledged on all hands not to have been insti-

\* *Prudent.* in *Lib. de Coronis.* Father *Paul's History of Ecclesiastical Benefices and Revenues*, Chap. III.

† See his discourse *De Lapsis*, before quoted.

tuted by the apostles, were yet early brought in by human ambition; while, at the same time, the early records are so scanty, that we are unable to pronounce *when* they were first introduced.

To this Dr. Bowden gives two answers. The *first* is, that we *can* decide, with *certainty*, when the authority of metropolitans took its rise: And the *second*, that the cases are by no means *parallel*, and that the argument, even if the facts were admitted, is of no force.

To establish the first point, Dr. B. quotes a short passage from Dr. Cave, a divine of the eighteenth century, who gives it as his *opinion*, that metropolitans were introduced "not long after the apostolic age, when sects and schisms broke in apace, and when controversies were multiplied between particular bishops." But was Cave a *primitive father*? What authority had he to decide such a question? And what did he mean by the expression "not long after the apostolic age?" Did he mean two, three, or four centuries? All is vague and conjectural. Besides, from this passage it leaks out, after all Dr. Bowden's care to conceal it, or rather his explicit denial of the fact, that there were *sects* and *schisms*, and *jarrings* among the bishops, "not long after the apostolic age." In support of the same assertion, Dr. Bowden quotes a longer passage from Bingham, another divine of the eighteenth century, who, after expressing his agreement with Cave, adds, "*Perhaps* the office of *metropolitan* took its rise from that common respect and deference, which was usually paid by the rest of the bishops to the bishops of the *civil* metropolis in every province." He then produces, what Dr. B. calls "sufficient evidence," that this office existed in the *second* century; that there are traces of its commencement as early as the time of *Irenæus*; that it advanced *gradually*; and that it was not until about the time of the Council of *Nice* that the term *metropolitan* came into frequent use. Now, though Dr. Bowden contents himself with very slender proof; and though his confident conclusion, that "there is not the *least* difficulty in determining when *primates* or *metropolitans* took their rise in the Christian Church," is, in the connection in which it stands, truly ludicrous; yet, allowing it to be correct, does not every discerning reader perceive that he is unwittingly confirming my argument? He concedes, that *metropolitans* were *not* instituted by the apostles; and he also concedes, that they



were brought in, by *human contrivance*, soon after the apostolic age ; but that they were not spoken of familiarly, under this title, until near the middle of the *fourth* century. But how they were introduced ; by what *means* ; whether with or without *opposition*, neither he, nor the divines whom he quotes as his authorities, have any thing more than *conjecture* to offer. And is not this exactly the ground on which I assert the fact to stand ? With whom is this gentleman contending ?

Dr. *Bowden* goes further, and contends, in the *second* place, that, “ even if it were impossible to determine the *time* when metropolitans first appeared in the church, there would be no parallel between this difficulty, and the one relating to episcopacy.” But why no parallel ? The office of *metropolitan* was a grade of ecclesiastical pre-eminence, as well as that of ordinary *bishop*. Now, if it be granted, that the former office *was* introduced by human contrivance ; that it was *gradually* brought in ; that it was introduced without any known *opposition* and *noise* ; why might not the same facts have occurred with respect to prelacy ? Dr. *Bowden*, indeed, asserts, that the office\* of *metropolitan* was, in the beginning, a mere *presidency*, introduced for the sake of convenience and order ; that in this stage of its rise, there was no material encroachment on the rights of others ; and, of course, nothing that had a tendency to excite alarm, resentment, or opposition. And is not this exactly what we say concerning the rise of prelacy ? In all these respects, indeed, Dr. B. would persuade us, that the rise of *metropolitanism* was wholly unlike that of *prelacy*. But for this we have only his word. He does not produce even a shadow of proof. On the contrary we maintain, that prelacy arose, with very little variation, in the *same* manner in which he represents *metropolitanism* as having been brought in. And the acknowledged fact, that the latter was early introduced, without exciting, so far as we know, any extensive opposition or noise, we consider as conclusive evidence that the former *might* have arisen in the same manner. We suppose, that the first steps, in both cases, were small, and studiously ordered so as to excite as little attention as possible ; that the introduction of new *names* was, for a considerable time, carefully avoided ; and that the object was, in fact, fully gained, before the mask was thrown off, and the purpose avowed.

Dr. B. insists that the rise of metropolitans was not as *likely* to

excite alarm and opposition as that of bishops. But why not? Were not prelates as likely to perceive and take the alarm, when some of their own number assumed a superiority over the rest, as presbyters were, when some of *their* number gradually gained a pre-eminence among the brethren? Were prelates less discerning, less awake to encroachments, or less conscientious in guarding against them, than presbyters? But, says Dr. *Bowden*, in the case of metropolitans, there was no usurpation of any particular *rite* or *power*; whereas, in the rise of prelacy, according to the ideas of Presbyterians, there was a direct usurpation of the *ordaining* and *confirming* power, which before belonged to all presbyters in common. The latter, therefore, in his opinion, was much less likely to gain undisputed admittance than the former. But in this reasoning Dr. *Bowden* betrays a total misunderstanding of what Presbyterians believe. They do not suppose, or admit, that the usurpation of the *ordaining* power was the *first* step, or even *among the first* steps in the rise of *prelacy*. They suppose that an *occasional* and then a *stated presidency* were the first steps; and that the power of ordaining was not taken entirely out of the hands of presbyters, until several centuries after the claims of *prelacy* commenced.

The cases, then, after all that Dr. *Bowden* has said to the contrary, are strictly parallel. The *time* and *manner* of the rise of metropolitans, are left as completely undefined in early history, as are the *time* and *manner* of the rise of prelates. In both cases, by a careful comparison of testimony, we can come with certainty, *near* the truth, but nothing more. In both cases, the rise was evidently *gradual*. In both cases, the first steps were *small* and dictated, as those concerned were made to believe, by convenience, expediency, and even necessity, rather than by ambition. And, in both cases, it was not until several hundred years, when long habit and prescription had reconciled every mind to the usurpation, that its claims were openly and unreservedly urged.

It is of some importance to advert to two or three other facts. Although *Metropolitans*, when first introduced, appear to have been, as Dr. B. supposes, nothing more than mere *presidents* or *moderators*; yet it is manifest that they very soon became some-

thing more. I know not when those writings, called the *Apostolical Canons*, were composed. Dr. B. thinks in the second and third centuries. But one thing I know, that, whenever they were composed, the 34th canon decrees, “that the bishops of every nation ought to know him who is *first* among them, and *acknowledge him for their head*, and do *nothing* of moment without *his consent*, and *he* nothing without *their’s*.” Here is a power greatly exceeding that of a mere *presiding* equal. How was this power acquired? How could it be acquired so *soon*, and when, if we may believe Dr. B. no such thing as clerical *ambition* existed? Above all, how could it be acquired so *quietly*, and with so *little opposition*, as that the several steps of its progress should not be found recorded by the early fathers? Again, in the age of *Cyprian*, we find *sub-deacons* and *readers* spoken of as distinct orders of *clergy*, who have each a distinct *ordination*.\* How could these orders be introduced, in an age, which, according to Dr. B. was so perfectly pure, and so strict in its adherence to apostolic precedent? How could *readers* and *sub-deacons* be ranked among the *clergy*? This single fact is enough to show, that before the age of *Cyprian*, undisguised innovation had found its way into the church; and also that, when *deacons* are spoken of, by some of the fathers, as *ministers* of the word, and as of the order of *clergy*, it affords not the smallest presumption that such was the apostolic model.

As another proof, that a spirit of ambition and of ecclesiastical encroachment, early began to appear in the church, I mentioned the rise and progress of the *Papacy*. I observed, that the anti-christian claims of the bishop of *Rome* began as early as the time of *Irenæus*, and might be considered as gradually rising from that period, until he was at length established and acknowledged as *universal bishop*. And I observed, moreover, that, “although the most impartial and learned divines may and do differ among themselves in fixing the several dates of the rise, progress, and establishment of this great spiritual usurper; yet the *fact*, that he did thus rise and advance, and erect a tyrannical throne in the

\* *Cyprian*. Epist. 8. and 39.

“ church, contrary to all that might have been expected both from  
 “ the piety and the selfishness of the early Christians, is doubted  
 “ by none.”

In answer to this argument Dr. *Bowden* ventures to assert, that  
 “ there is not, before the *seventh century*, the *least trace* of any  
 “ system of policy in the *Holy See*, (that of *Rome*,) to establish  
 “ its claim of superiority over other bishops.” Of an assertion of  
 this kind, I really feel at a loss what to think, or what to say.  
 That it is an assertion which directly contradicts all history, I need  
 not stay to demonstrate. Every well-informed man knows it to  
 be so. The only question which can arise is, how Dr. *Bowden*  
 could have ventured to advance it?

By the *papacy*, strictly speaking, is meant that claim which  
 the bishop of *Rome* has long made of being, as such, the successor  
 of *Peter*, superior to all other bishops, and the visible head of the  
 church. No man in his senses ever supposed that this system of  
 ecclesiastical usurpation was either claimed or acknowledged *all at*  
*once*. It had a rise, a progress, and a completion. That it did  
 not reach its summit until the seventh century, I have no hesita-  
 tion in granting. Nor have I ever penned a sentence inconsistent  
 with this acknowledgment. But that it *began* to rise several  
 centuries before, every protestant historian that I have ever met  
 with, has unequivocally stated : And that it made slow, but steady  
 progress from the time of *Victor* to that of *Boniface*, insomuch,  
 that at the end of every successive century, it was perceived to  
 have sensibly gained ground, I took for granted, before I saw Dr.  
*Bowden's* book, that every man who regarded his reputation, either  
 for discernment or candour, would readily allow. Nay, Dr. *Bow-*  
*den* himself, if I understand him, acknowledges that the power of  
 popes was *gradually* assumed ; for “ the *several epochs* of their  
 increasing power,” he tells us, have been so distinctly marked,  
 that we can be at no loss to ascertain them. And yet he says,  
 “ there was not, before the *seventh century*, the *least trace* of any  
 “ system of policy in the *Holy See* to establish its claim of supe-  
 “ riority over other bishops !” Unless this gentleman can retreat  
 behind some unusual signification of terms, I know not how he  
 can escape very serious charges from every discerning reader.

I consider the following facts, then, as perfectly established—

viz. that as early as the second and third centuries there was quite enough clerical *ambition* in the church to account for the rise of prelacy; that the acknowledged rise of *metropolitans*, during that period, is a proof, at once, that there was a disposition among many of the clergy to aspire after pre-eminence, and that it was by no means an impossible thing so far to hoodwink and cajole others, as to obtain it; and that the beginning, progress, and establishment of the *papal* power, is quite as difficult to be accounted for on episcopal principles, as the introduction of prelacy by human authority. But, if it be fact, that there were materials enough in the clergy of that age, and circumstances enough in the times, to generate irregular ambition; and if other *facts* demonstrate that they *did* cherish this ambition; that they *did* thus aspire and encroach; then we are surely warranted in inferring that the human invention and introduction of prelacy, was not only a *possible*, but a very *probable* event.

Among the numerous facts which prove that diocesan episcopacy is an *innovation* on the apostolic model, and that it was *gradually* introduced, I mentioned in my former letters, that ministerial parity continued longest in those parts of the church which were at the greatest distance from the capital cities. As an instance, to illustrate this remark, I observed, that “the churches in *Scotland* remained *Presbyterian* in their government, from the introduction of Christianity into that country, in the *second* century, until the *fifth* century, when *Palladius* succeeded in introducing diocesan bishops.” This fact Dr. *Bowden* entirely denies. Let us see on what evidence it rests. That the gospel was introduced into *North Britain* before the *fifth* century, is evident from *Tertullian*, who says, “The places of *Britain* to which the Romans could not have access, are notwithstanding subject to Christ.”\* *Fordon*, a Scotch historian, who wrote in the fourteenth century, and who was no Presbyterian, on the one hand declares, (as Dr. B. acknowledges) that the *Scots* received the Christian faith in the year of our Lord 203; and on the other asserts, (what Dr. B. has not acknowledged,) that “Before the coming of *Palladius*, the *Scots*, following the custom of the primitive church, had teachers

\* *Contra. Jud.* Cap. vii.

“ of the faith, and dispensers of the sacraments, who were only “ presbyters or monks.”\* This statement is confirmed by *Major*, another Scottish historian, who wrote about the beginning of the sixteenth century, and who lived and died a friend of prelacy. He declares, “ The *Scots* were instructed in the faith, by priests and “ monks, without bishops.”† *Boethius*, a third historian of *Scotland*, who was contemporary with *Major*, and also a prelatist, still more explicitly says, “ *Palladius* was the FIRST who exercised any “ hierarchial power among the *Scots*, being ordained their bishop “ by the pope, whereas, before, their priests were, by the suffrages “ of the people, chosen out of the monks and culdees.”‡ *Prosper Aquitanicus*, in his *Chronicle*, has these words—“ *Palladius* “ is ordained by Pope *Cælestine*, for the *Scots*, who had already “ believed in Christ, and is sent to them to be their first bishop.” *Palladius*, according to this writer, did not introduce the gospel among the *Scots*; they believed in Christ before he was sent to them; but he was the first bishop, or prelate, that they ever had. The same fact is attested by Cardinal *Baronius*, who says, “ All “ men agree that this nation, (the *Scots*,) had *Palladius* their FIRST “ bishop from Pope *Cælestine*.”§

Dr. *Bowden* has no other method of evading the force of this evidence, but by insinuating, (as others, who were perplexed by the argument, had done before him,) that by the *Scots* these writers meant the *Irish*! This evasion is too ridiculous to be seriously refuted. It contradicts the most authentic history.|| And if Dr. B. will take the trouble to consult his own episcopal historians *Skinner* and *Goodall*,¶ he will be satisfied, that in adopting this notion, he has been led astray by blind guides. But, suppose that it were even so; what advantage to Dr. *Bowden*'s cause would result from this discovery? Would it not be a fact equally against him, if it were found that the churches of *Ireland* instead of *Scot-*

\* *Hist. Lib.* iii. Cap. 8.

† *De Gestis. Scotor.* Lib. ii. Cap. 2.

‡ *Scot. Hist.* Lib. vi.

§ *Annal.* 429.

|| Cardinal *Baronius* expressly distinguishes between the visits of *Palladius* to *Scotland*, and *Ireland*. His visit to the former country, he mentions in the manner cited above: that to the latter, he speaks of in a subsequent paragraph.

¶ *Skinner's Ecclesiastical History of Scotland*, Letter 1. *Goodall's Introduction to the History and Antiquities of Scotland*, Chapters 2. 7, and 16.



*land*, were under the government of presbyters, without prelates, for more than 200 years after their being first planted ?

Dr. *Bowden*, in attempting to show the improbability that prelacy was introduced *after* the apostolic age, as a measure of *human expediency*, still insists that, if it were introduced at all, it must have been *very suddenly*. To corroborate this assertion, he represents some of the ablest Presbyterian divines who have written on the subject, as acknowledging that prelacy had been brought in as early as the middle of the *second century*. He assures us, more than once, that, among others, the learned *Blondel* concedes the existence of prelacy as early as the year of our Lord 140, which was within fifty years of the death of the last apostle. This is a misrepresentation ; and a misrepresentation so extraordinary, that I know not how to account for it but by supposing that Dr. *Bowden* never saw *Blondel's* far-famed work. Whatever Dr. B. may say to the contrary, *Blondel* does *not* make such a concession as he imputes to him. The passage to which Dr. B. no doubt, refers, is found in the *preface* to the *Apology* ; and its import is, that about the year 140, according to the best light the author had been able to attain, one of the steps toward the establishment of prelacy was taken, which consisted in choosing *standing moderators*. If by *bishops* be understood, not what the scriptures and the Presbyterian church mean by that title, but what Dr. *Bowden* and his friends mean, an order of clergy, who were alone invested with the power of ordination ; then it is perfectly manifest to all who ever perused *Blondel's* work, that its grand scope is to show the direct contrary of that which Dr. *Bowden* ascribes to him ; and that for this purpose, he quotes *Cyprian*, *Tertullian*, *Origen*, and still later fathers, who lived long after the year 140, to show that, *in their day* episcopacy, in the prelatical sense of the word, was *not* introduced. In short, *Blondel's* whole book is written to prove that prelacy was *not* an apostolic institution ; that it was brought into the church *gradually* ; and that it was *several hundred years* in gaining an establishment. Considering the frequency and positiveness with which Dr. *Bowden* undertakes to state the testimony of *Blondel*, he certainly ought to have understood it better.

Dr. B. also asserts that *Salmasius*, an acute and learned advocate of ministerial parity, makes a concession of the same kind with that which he ascribes to *Blondel*. I have never seen the

*Walo Messalinus* of the celebrated Presbyterian ; and cannot undertake with confidence to say that Dr. B. has misrepresented him also ; but I strongly suspect this to be the case, and shall certainly require, after all that I have seen, better evidence of the contrary than his assertion. The learned *Chamier* and *Du Moulin* are also quoted by Dr. B. as making still more pointed and important concessions. But as he has not chosen to inform us *where* these concessions are to be found, I consider myself as liberated from all further obligation to notice them.\* I am verily persuaded, however, that he has been deceived by the representation of others, and that he entirely mistakes the opinions of those writers.

After carefully reviewing all that Dr. *Bowden* has said on the rise and progress of prelacy, I only think it necessary to offer and illustrate a single additional remark. It is this. That the indiscriminate application of the titles *bishop* and *presbyter*, during the *first* and *second*, and occasionally, as Dr. B. himself acknowledges, in the *third* century, furnishes, in my view, a most powerful argument in support of ministerial parity, and that in a point of light which I have not hitherto stated. The use of terms is to express distinct ideas. The use of *official titles* is to express in single terms official rank and powers. Now it is conceded by Dr. *Bowden*, and by Episcopalians generally, that the titles *bishop* and *presbyter* were applied indiscriminately, in the days of the apostles, to designate the same order of clergy ; and that both are most frequently applied, in the New Testament, to what they call the *second order*, or the *pastors of single churches*. They contend that the *apostles themselves* were, strictly speaking, the prelates of the apostolic church ; and that the title of *bishop* was, in fact, then applied precisely as the Presbyterians now apply it, to every minister of the gospel who had a pastoral charge. This they all explicitly grant. But they insist that, in process of time, as the apostles died, the title of *apostle* was laid aside, and that of *bishop* began to take its place, and to be restricted to an order of clergy superior to pastors, and succeeding to the apostolic pre-eminence.

\* It is really not a little extraordinary that Dr. *Bowden*, after all his promises to the contrary, should so frequently be guilty of this conduct.

But does not all this carry improbability on the very face of it? Is it likely that the inspired apostles, or men immediately taught by them, when the churches, for more than half a century, had been accustomed to employ a certain title to designate a particular class of ecclesiastical officers, would have adopted that very title to designate a totally different class, and that when all the riches of language were open to their selection? Can it be supposed, above all, that this would have been done in a case in which, if we believe our episcopal brethren, the distinction of orders has always been essential to the very being of the church? It cannot be supposed. Had their object been to produce confusion of ideas, and perpetual inconvenience in the expression of them, they could scarcely have adopted a more direct method to attain their end.

But, on the other hand, supposing prelacy *not* to have been an apostolic institution, but to have been brought in by human ambition, and that in a *gradual* and almost *insensible* manner, as we contend; then nothing is more natural than this indiscriminate use of official titles in early times. The most effectual way to disguise a *new office*, and to prevent the mass of the people from suspecting it of either encroachment or innovation, was to give it an *old name*. When, therefore, one of the pastors, in a city or district, began to assume pre-eminent honours and powers over his colleagues, instead of taking some new and high sounding title, it was an obvious dictate of policy to content himself with a title which was common to his brethren. This policy was accordingly adopted. The plain title of *bishop*, which was before given to *all* pastors, and to which the people had been long accustomed, was still the only one which the aspiring individual ventured to employ. But it obviously would not have served the purpose either of convenience or ambition to *continue* this community of title when a new order had arisen in the church. Some alteration of ecclesiastical language was necessary for the sake of being understood; and it was equally necessary that the alteration should be such as not to alarm or offend. The consequence was, that the ordinary pastors gradually dropped the title of *bishop*, leaving it to be the appropriate title of those who had succeeded in raising themselves above the rest, and consenting to be called *presbyters* or *elders* only.

When, therefore, our episcopal brethren grant, as they all do, that the titles of *bishop* and *presbyter*, in the days of the apostles,

were interchangeably applied to the same class of officers, and those ordinary pastors of the church ; when they grant, as they also universally do, that the *former* of these titles was gradually disused by ordinary pastors and appropriated to prelates ; and when they further concede, as they do with one voice, that the process of dropping this title on the part of the former, and appropriating it on the part of the latter, took up a period of *more than a hundred years* after the death of the apostles ;—I think no candid man can hesitate to conclude, that the necessity of this change in ecclesiastical titles, arose from *the introduction of an order of officers before unknown in the church.*

What confirms this reasoning is, that we certainly know facts of a similar kind to have taken place very early. Dr. *Bowden* himself asserts that although *metropolitans* existed, in fact, in the second century, yet that the use of this distinctive title, was but little known before the council of *Nice*, in the *fourth* century. It is certain that the title of *pope* was frequently applied to pastors in general, as early as the third century. We find *Cyprian* repeatedly called by this title, in the epistles addressed to him. It was not until a considerable time afterwards, that the Roman pontiff succeeded in appropriating to himself the title of *THE pope*, by way of eminence. These examples are exactly in point. A policy which we know to have been adopted in other cases, we have every reason to believe was adopted in that under consideration. In short, our doctrine concerning the rise and progress of prelacy is not only, in itself, natural and probable ; but it is so remarkably confirmed by early history, and especially by a variety of minute facts incidentally recorded, that my only surprise is, how any candid mind can withstand the evidence in its favour.

## LETTER X.

## MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS.—CONCLUSION.

## CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

I HAVE now nearly completed my review of such parts of Dr. *Bowden's* volumes, and of Mr. *How's* pamphlet, as appear to me worthy of notice. I have, indeed, passed over many passages in both, which might justly have been made the objects of severe criticism ; but which I considered as either of too little importance to demand animadversion, or so obviously erroneous, as to leave no unprejudiced reader of the least discernment in danger of being led astray by them. It only remains that I make a few miscellaneous remarks, and then close a controversy which I unfeignedly regret that there should ever have been a necessity of beginning.

It was my intention to add another letter on the *concessions of Episcopalians*, for the purpose of vindicating and establishing what I had before advanced under this head ;\* and also of presenting a

\* Dr. *Bowden* has made an insinuation with regard to *one* of the episcopal concessions cited in my work, of which it is proper to take notice. He says he has examined *Jewel's Defence of his Apology*, and cannot find the passage which I profess to quote from that work, in my seventh letter. He therefore infers that I have either taken the quotation at second hand, on the authority of some person who has blundered in the business; or that my references are to a different edition from that which he has consulted. I can assure this *learned professor*, who has, it must be confessed, much reason to plume himself on the fairness and accuracy

number of additional concessions from the works of eminent episcopal writers. To fulfil the latter purpose, I had made a large collection of extracts from the works of Bishop *Jewel*, Bishop *Andrews*, Bishop *Morton*, Bishop *Hall*, Bishop *Taylor*, Bishop *Burnet*, Bishop *Warburton*, Dr. *Jorton*, and several other prelates and divines, all containing sentiments very different from those of Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*, and making concessions of the most decisive kind. But having already drawn out this work to a length greatly beyond my original design, I am constrained to suppress the proposed letter, and to content myself with the episcopal concessions already laid before the public.

But really, independent of the fear of trespassing on the patience of my readers, there is little use in collecting testimony for such opponents as Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How*. However abundant and pointed it may be, they appear to find no difficulty in persuading themselves that it is of no value. The unceremonious manner in which Dr. B. rejects testimony is amusing. The testimony of Archbishop *Grindal* is set aside on the ground of his being "somewhat fanatically inclined," and "lax in his discipline." The testimony of *Wickliffe*, on the ground of his being supposed to have embraced error as to other points. The testimony of Dr. *Rainolds* is rejected, because, though a regular member of the Church of *England*, he was a *Puritan* at heart. The testimony of Archbishop *Usher* is pronounced to consist only in a *scholastic distinction*, which dull Presbyterians have not perceived; the difference between him and other Episcopalians being only *verbal*." That of Bishop *Stillingfleet*, upon the ground of the immaturity of a juvenile mind, the visionary speculations of which were corrected by age. That of Archbishop *Tillotson*, because he was "a very moderate churchman,"—"a sort of neutral man," and withal "suspected of Arianism and Universalism." That of Bishop *Croft*, because his name is so obscure that not one of the Episcopal clergy of this city ever heard of him before; and because

of his quotations, that I possess a copy of the work from which my citation was made; that my edition is, like that which he professes to have consulted with so much care, (a *folio*, printed in 1570,) and that I am ready, whenever he will please to favour me with a visit, to show him the very words which I have quoted, in the very page referred to as containing them.



he was "a man of very *comprehensive* principles, and an enemy of all creeds and subscriptions." That of *Mosheim*, because "he had the system of his own church to maintain."\* But when testimony is adduced which cannot be set aside by any such frivolous pretext, it is boldly pronounced "worthless," "of no value," perfectly "destitute of force," &c. Nothing can be drawn from testimony. It is waste of time and labour to collect it.

Mr. *How*'s mode of treating the concessions of the Episcopalians, is still more ludicrous. He complains that I have produced extracts only from between *thirty* and *forty* writers; pronounces this a number too trifling to be regarded as of any weight; and expresses a *suspicion* that he could present a much larger list of Presbyterian writers who have opposed the doctrines of their own church.—In answer to this plea, I will only say, that when Mr. *How* shall present me with an equally long list of standard Presbyterian writers, who are praised, quoted, studied, and made the *guides* of theological students, and who at the same time oppose our fundamental doctrines, I shall then acknowledge that those doctrines are not the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church.

Were there time to go over in detail the extracts from Episcopal writers which I have presented as *concessions*, it would be easy to show that almost all the glosses of Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* are

\* If the testimony of *Mosheim* is to be rejected on this ground, then the testimony of all the Episcopalians quoted by Dr. B. himself, must be set aside on the same ground. Will he agree to this? Besides, I thought Dr. *Bowden* had assured us that the *Lutheran* church is *Episcopal*; and yet Dr. *Mosheim*'s testimony *against* Episcopacy is to be rejected, because he had "the system of his own church to maintain!" The truth is, the testimony of *Mosheim* and of other *Lutheran* divines on this subject is peculiarly weighty: for while they have in their church a sort of *qualified* Episcopacy; and while they have as strong a temptation as other churches to place their constitution on the footing of *divine right*; they *unanimously* grant now, what they have unanimously granted since the days of *Luther*, that prelacy is not a divine or apostolic institution; that it was introduced *after* the days of the apostles; and that it rests on the ground of *human expediency alone*. This fact will weigh more, with every impartial inquirer, than all that the collected learning and zeal of the divines of the church of *England* have ever advanced in favour of Episcopacy, because "they have the system of their own church to maintain."

either irrelevant or worse. But such a process would be an unreasonable trespass on your patience. I have already given a specimen of the mode of answering adopted by the former of these gentlemen, in the case of Bishop *Jewel*. The latter is no less vulnerable in a variety of instances. He tells us, for example, (p. 56.) that Archbishop *Usher* pronounces Presbyterian ordination to be *schismatical*, in all cases excepting that of *necessity* alone. This is not true. *Usher* says neither *this*, nor any thing like it. He says, "the ordinations made by *such* presbyters as have severed themselves from those bishops, unto whom they had sworn canonical obedience, cannot possibly by me be excused from being *schismatical*;" immediately after which he goes on to say, that he "loves and honours" the Presbyterian churches of *Holland* and *France*, as "true members of the church universal; and that he would with pleasure receive the sacrament from the hands of the ministers in either.\*

My argument drawn from the *practical influence of prelacy*, has, as I fully expected, both *embarrassed* and *offended* my opponents. But, after all their impatience and irritation under it, and all their cavils against it, I still think it a sound and irresistible argument. If the Episcopal Church, be the *only* true church, the *only* denomination of professing Christians who are "in covenant with God," then the demand that they should exhibit more of the distinguishing *character* of God's covenant people, viz. *universal holiness*, is surely a reasonable demand. In truth, their mode of replying to this demand amounts to a surrender of the argument. With their subterfuge respecting the *Quakers*, I have already shown that we have nothing to do.

Dr. *Bowden* complains that, in speaking of the *practical influence of prelacy*, I have expressed myself in terms much too severe concerning prelates and their system. He complains especially of the following passage: "If we examine the history of any Episcopal Church on earth, we shall find it exhibiting, to say the least, *as large* a share of heresy, contention, and schism, *as any* which bears the Presbyterian form: and what is more, we shall ever find the prelates themselves quite *as forward* as any others in scenes of violence and outrage." He asserts that "these charges

\* *Judgment of the late Archbishop of Armagh*, 110—125.

“ could not have proceeded from a proper motive ;” and that, “ if they were even well-founded, they ought not to have been advanced.” On what ground Dr. Bowden should have taken so much offence at this passage, it is not easy to see. Was it going either an indecent or an unreasonable length, when I was fairly called to speak on the subject, to say, that prelacy has been proved to be quite *as favourable* to heresy, contention, and schism, as Presbyterianism ; and *prelates* as chargeable with violence and outrage as *presbyters* ? If this was indecent, then what shall be said of this gentleman himself, who has asserted that *every charge* which I have brought against prelacy “ may be retorted upon presbytery, in a *ten-fold* degree ? If my *motives* were bad for merely alleging that Presbyterians stand on *as good* ground, with regard to the practical influence of their system, as Episcopalians do ; what must have been the motives of Dr. B. in alleging that the former are *ten-fold worse* than the latter ? What must have been his motives in expressing himself frequently in much more severe and indelicate terms of Presbyterians and Presbytery ? But the cases are, in his estimation, essentially different. The abuse of Presbyterians is no crime. That this must be his opinion is evident from the reproachful charges which he unreservedly heaps upon them, in those very parts of his work in which he censures me for my unexceptionable comparison.

Dr. Bowden still insists that there is peculiar efficacy in the episcopal form of government in securing the *unity* of the Church ; and undertakes to give a contrasted view of Presbyterian and Episcopal churches with respect to this point. I utterly deny the correctness of his alleged facts on this subject ; and have no fear in repeating my assertion, that the history of any number of Episcopal Churches exhibits quite as large a share of heresy, contention, schism, as the history of any corresponding number of Presbyterian Churches. I am perfectly willing to go for an example to the Church of *England*, or to any part of the world, where prelacy has ever existed ; and am sure that no impartial student of ecclesiastical history will be of a different opinion. What does Dr. Bowden mean by *unity*, as applied to a church ? Does he mean *unity of spirit* or *unity of name* ? If the latter, then no one who understands Christianity can respect or value it : if the former, then it may be shown, that the church of *England*, (which probably

Dr. B. would consider as the most favourable specimen the world has ever seen,) is, and has long been, as much a stranger to it, as any of her neighbours. If all manner of discordant sentiment; if every grade of heresy, from that of *Arminius*, to the cold, gloomy, semi-deistical scheme of *Socinus*; if the constant public manifestation of this discordance, and of these contending heresies; and that not only among the people, and the inferior clergy, but also among the prelates themselves; if embracing multitudes of clergy who disbelieve her *articles*, who dislike her *liturgy*, and who yet have consciences which admit of their canonically swearing to the belief and support of both;—if these things constitute *unity*, then indeed she may be said to possess it. But this is a kind of unity of which the apostles knew nothing, and which, if they were now on earth, they would pronounce of no value. There is unspeakably more real *unity* among all the different portions of Presbyterians in the *United States*, though called by different names, than exists, or has for near 200 years existed, in the Church of *England*, though nominally *one*. They have the same confession of faith, the same mode of worship, the same form of church government, and are, in all important points, so entirely united, that many of their best members often wonder and lament, that they are not one in *name* as well as in *reality*.

With respect to the doctrine of *uninterrupted succession*, I have little to add to what is contained in my former letters. Dr. *Bowden* is indeed right in suspecting that I lay no great stress on this doctrine, as he understands and states it. That there always *has* been, since the days of Christ, and that there always *will* be to the end of the world, a true church, and a true and valid gospel ministry, in that church, I firmly believe. But as to the *historical proof* that this succession in the ministry has never been *interrupted*, by any event which might be called an *irregular* or *uncanonical ordination*, I neither care for it, nor believe in it.

The promise of the Saviour that neither the church nor her ministry shall ever become extinct, is enough to satisfy me. That the succession in this ministry will be kept up in the *same exact manner* in every age, I consider neither scripture nor common sense as requiring me to believe. There is no Presbyterian who contends more zealously for a strict adherence to ecclesiastical rules than I

am disposed to do ; nor one who deems it of more importance that we set our faces against every kind of spurious investiture, and that we retain the scriptural method of ordination by the *laying on of the hands of the presbytery* ; yet I have no hesitation in saying, that if it were to be discovered, that, about *two hundred or five hundred* years ago, the regular succession of our ordinations had been really interrupted by some ecclesiastical oversight or disorder, I should not consider it as in the least degree affecting either the legitimacy of our present ministry, or the validity of our present ordinances.

The learned and acute episcopal divine *Chillingworth*, if I understand him, takes the same ground, and views the subject in the same light. Though he is a warm advocate for the apostolical institution of prelacy ; yet he evidently considers the doctrine of uninterrupted succession, and especially the idea of attaching fundamental importance to it, as a popish error ; and the *historic proof* of the *fact* as equally ridiculous and impossible.\*

Dr. *Bowden*, however, objects that, even on Presbyterian principles, the episcopal succession is better than ours ; or rather that ours is utterly invalid, because, at the æra of the reformation, the presbyters, in different parts of *Europe*, who first began to ordain, had not the ordaining power *specifically* or *professedly* imparted to them by the bishops who ordained them ; so that they did not even stand on equal ground with modern Presbyterian ministers ; on whom in their ordination, the ordaining power is formally bestowed. But this objection has no force. The popish doctrine, “that it is the *intention* of the administrator which constitutes the validity of an ecclesiastical ordinance,” is discarded by all protestants. And as the first presbyters who undertook to ordain, after emerging from the darkness of popery, were regularly invested with the power of preaching the gospel, and administering sacraments, all Presbyterians consider the right to ordain as necessarily included in those powers, whether the fact be mentioned, or even thought of at the time of ordination or not.

Dr. *Bowden*, toward the close of his last letter, expresses much irritated feeling at my having represented clerical imparity as a

\* See his *Safe Way of Salvation*, Part I. Chapters 2. and 6.

"*popish doctrine*." He demands, in a tone to which I forbear to give a name, whether I "know what *popery* is?" In the next page he calls upon me to "lay my hand upon my heart, and in the fear of God to say, whether I do not think that I have most grossly libelled the whole Episcopal church throughout the world;" and adds, that "something explicit upon this point will be expected from me." This good gentleman shall have "something explicit." Let me assure him, then, that, after the most serious and conscientious review of all that I have written, I am so far from thinking that I have "libelled" the episcopal church in representing prelacy as a "*popish doctrine*," that all my inquiries convince me, more than ever, of the justness of my representation, and embolden me to repeat and urge it with new confidence. In answer to Dr. *Bowden's* question, what is *popery*? I answer, *Popery*, strictly speaking, as was remarked in a former letter, is the ecclesiastical supremacy usurped by the bishop of *Rome*. But, more generally speaking, it implies that *system of corruption*, both in doctrine, government, and practice, which characterizes, and has, for nearly fifteen hundred years, characterized the *Romish*, or *Latin* church. Hence *transubstantiation*, *purgatory*, *auricular confession*, the worship of *images*, the invocation of *saints*, and the adoration of the *cross*, are all spoken of by the most accurate writers, as *popish errors*; although most of them had crept into the church, long before the period which Dr. *Bowden* assigns for the rise of the papal usurpation; and although none of them, excepting perhaps the first, could ever be traced to the Roman pontiff himself as their immediate author.

I say then, again, that, in this sense, clerical imparity is a "*popish error*," nearly coeval in its rise with the commencement of the papacy; originating from the same source; and tending, in a degree, to the same mischief. And though I would by no means place the former of these errors on a *par* with the latter; nor venture to pronounce the one, as I do the other, an *antichristian* abuse, being fully persuaded that many of the greatest and best men that ever lived have been friends of prelacy; yet all my inquiries have more and more confirmed me in the persuasion, that it is a real and a mischievous departure from apostolic simplicity, and that it first arose from the same principle of clerical ambition which gave rise to the papacy. I hope this is "explicit" enough



Nor is this all. When I look over the charges and reasonings urged by the popish writers, against the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*, as they are preserved and exhibited in *Perrin's* history of those illustrious witnesses for the truth; when I read the language used by the popish persecutors of the English reformers, as it is recorded in different parts of *Fox's Acts* and *Monuments*; when I examine the cavils and objections made by *Harding*, *Saunders*, *Stapleton*, *Campian*, and other zealous Catholics, against the church of *England*; and when I look into the writings which *Chillingworth*, in his *Safe Way of Salvation*, examines and refutes, I could almost fancy myself listening to the pleas of some high-toned Episcopalians in the *United States* against their Presbyterian neighbours. Could you make it convenient to examine those writings for yourselves, you would find in them so large a portion of the same reasonings, and the same language, which are now found in certain episcopal writers; so much of the same cry, in exactly or nearly the same words, about *the church! the true church! the apostolic church!* so much of the same kind of charges, respecting *schism*, departure from the *covenanted way of salvation*, loss of the *apostolic succession*, and having no *true priesthood*, or *valid ordinances*, as would fill you with astonishment, if not with emotions of a more unfavourable nature. Nor would your astonishment be at all diminished by finding, as you would find, that the friends of the Church of *England*, in defending themselves and their cause against the writers in question, resorted, in a multitude of instances, to the very same scriptural authorities, and the very same arguments, which Presbyterians employ against the high-toned prelatists of the present day!—Reflect seriously on these facts, and then ask yourselves, whether *Dr. Bowden* has any just reason to complain of me for speaking of an affinity between *his* claims and those of *popery*? I have, indeed, repeatedly suggested the idea of such an affinity, and distinctly *meant* to do so. I have done it, however, without passion, and without any wish to give unnecessary pain; but with a calm, deliberate, and firm conviction, that the suggestion was well-founded. And I can assure the gentlemen who have written so much and so resentfully for the purpose of removing it, that their publications are far, very far, from having diminished the force of this conviction.

I have now, my brethren, completed my examination of such parts of Dr. *Bowden's* and Mr. *How's* letters as I deem worthy of notice. It was my intention, after the example of the former of these gentlemen, to collect and present in one view, a catalogue of the "misrepresentations," "unfounded assertions," "mistakes," and "omissions," with which their pages abound. But finding these "misrepresentations," &c. to be so *numerous*, that a mere list of them, without comment, would fill another long letter; and many of them of so *disreputable* and *offensive* a character as not to be contemplated, even by opponents, without much commiseration for their authors; I have determined to spare myself the pain of writing, and you of reading such a letter; and here to take a final leave of the subject. I engaged in this controversy, without the least expectation of convincing Episcopalians, or of bringing over to my own opinion an individual of that communion; but solely for the purpose of satisfying and confirming Presbyterians. My object, I have the pleasure to know, is attained; and perceiving no further advantage in prolonging the controversy, I now lay down the pen; nor can I foresee any event that will ever tempt me to resume it on this subject.

I take for granted that all the gentlemen who have already appeared as my opponents, will again come before the public in reply to these letters; and will endeavour to persuade their readers that I have again misrepresented them and their cause, and again laid myself open to the heaviest charges and the severest reproach. All this and more I deliberately expect from gentlemen who have generally manifested a wish to have the last word. Should my expectation be realized, it will give me no uneasiness; nor shall I ever, (according to my present views,) take the least public notice of any thing that they may say. If, indeed, I should hereafter discover any *important errors* in the foregoing pages, (*trivial* ones, which do not affect the main question, will probably be discovered and pointed out,) I shall consider it as a duty which I owe to *you* to correct them. But with the controversy, as such, it is my firm resolution to have nothing more to do. This resolution is formed and expressed, not out of any disrespect to the gentlemen in question; but from a deliberate conviction that enough has been said on the Presbyterian side of the argument; and that my time

and pen may be hereafter devoted to objects more agreeable to myself, and more useful to others.

That the high-toned class of our episcopal brethren will, in any respect, alter their tone, either of speaking or writing, I have no expectation; nor have I the least anxiety that they should. Having provided the antidote, I am perfectly indifferent how often or how long the poison may be disseminated. Let them hereafter sing the praises of *their* "*truly primitive and apostolic church*," as loudly and as confidently as they please. Let them arrogate to themselves the honour of having the only *true priesthood*, and the only *valid ordinances* in the land. Let them embrace every occasion of pronouncing that *we*, as Presbyterians, are *rebels* and *schismatics*, and *out of the covenanted way of salvation*. I trust, my brethren, that not an individual among us has any feelings which are capable of being wounded by such language. It is, indeed, rather fitted to excite our pity, than our resentment; and is, certainly, much more disreputable to its authors, than to its objects.

That it is our earnest desire to live in peace and harmony with our brethren of the episcopal church, you can all bear witness. For them, I can truly say, that I entertain a high respect; and am happy to number individuals of that communion among my most valued friends. I know, also, that many of that denomination entirely disapprove, and deeply lament, the offensive writings of their own clergy, which have produced this controversy. Were I capable of applying to *such* persons many of the remarks which I have been compelled to apply, in the foregoing pages, to Dr. Bowden and Mr. How, I should deem myself one of the most uncandid and unjust of men. And, I will add, that it would give me much pain, if any thing in this, or my preceding volume, should be considered as pointing at Episcopalians of that liberal class. Differences of opinion there are, and will be, between us; but if these differences are maintained on both sides with that spirit *which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, they will neither foster the *wrath of man*, nor interfere with real Christian unity. Continue, then, I intreat you, to cherish on your part a spirit of amity and conciliation whatever reception it may meet with. Be always ready to exhibit your share, and more than your share, of this temper. And then, whatever may be the result, it will *turn to you for a testimony*. Remember that the haughty language, or the unscriptural

claims of the most uncharitable of our episcopal brethren, cannot possibly injure us ; but that we shall always injure ourselves exactly in proportion as we lose sight of that holy spirit which adorned and united the disciples of Christ in the days of apostolic purity, and which compelled even their enemies to exclaim, “ Behold how these Christians love one another.”

Whether your pastors are lawful ministers, and the ordinances which they dispense legitimate ordinances, are questions which, happily, it is not for Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* to decide. There is a day approaching when they will be decided before a higher tribunal, and with consequences more interesting than language can express. Happy will it be for us, if in that day, we shall all be found members of that holy church, which the Divine Redeemer hath purchased with his blood, and adorned with his Spirit ! Happy will it be for your ministers, if they shall be found, in that day, to have *preached not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves your servants for Jesus’ sake !* And happy will it be for you, my brethren, if it shall then appear that you have not rested in rites and forms ; but that you have *received the truth in the love of it ; that Christ has been formed in you the hope of glory ;* and that you belong to that *chosen generation, that royal priesthood, that holy nation, that peculiar people, who shall for ever show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light !* That this blessedness may be shared by you, and equally by them also, whom, in this controversy, we have been called to oppose, is the unfeigned prayer of,

My Christian Brethren,

Your affectionate Servant in the Gospel,

SAMUEL MILLER.















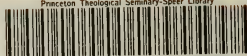
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